

Keeping Our Heritage Alive
CSA

The Ceylankam

The Journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia



Saradiel and friends distributing jewellery and cash to villagers.



Hendrick Appuhamy's Kopi Kade



Saradiel (right) and his hideout atop Utuwankanda



*Jandamarra and Saradiel
– story of rebels with
a cause*



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The Ceylanikam

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From the Editor

A tragedy reborn

Sri Lanka is not new to tragedy and loss of life. The Civil War that went on for 26 years is still fresh in the minds of many. But no one in their wildest dreams foresaw the horrible terrorist attacks perpetrated in that beautiful country on Easter Sunday of April 21. Easter has deep religious meaning to Sri Lankan Christians and they celebrate this paramount feast day with a devotion that exceeds that of Christmas, because Christ was crucified, died on the Cross and rose from the dead on the third day. After the Sri Lankan Armed Forces vanquished the rebels, the Civil War came to an end on May 18, 2009. The country slowly and bravely got back on its feet and the post-war period saw the spirit of a country grow in strength and purpose.

But then that peace and growth was not destined to last for long. A tribe of heartless terrorists with total disregard for life, not even that of their own parents, wives and children, chose to blast away the lives of innocent people. This heinous crime saw 230 men, women and children dead (with an entire family of five—mother, father and three children—among them) and more than 500 others hospitalised.

All Sri Lankans and others in Australia and the rest of the world were deeply shocked and grieved by the viciously planned and coordinated attacks on numerous Christian churches and tourist hotels in Colombo as people prayed and tourists relaxed on the holiday weekend.

News poured in within minutes of each other of explosions at St. Anthony's Church in Kochchikade (Colombo) then another explosion at St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo, followed closely by another blast in the Zion church in Batticaloa — while the devotees were all on their knees attending Holy Mass. Within minutes, another explosion at Cinnamon Grand Hotel, one more at Shangri-la Hotel, followed by another at Kingsbury Hotel while the Easter Sunday brunch was being served. All synchronised to go off with precision by the hands of suicide bombers. Sri Lanka and the world were stunned to the core in disbelief and dismay.

As the breaking world news flashed over television and radio and every other source of communication, we, Sri Lankans in Australia, searched desperately for answers and with fear, deeply concerned for the welfare of our own families, relatives and friends over in Sri Lanka. But we were NOT alone. On their own volition, people both known and unknown to us and of all religious denominations

and cultures, came forward offering their kindness and support to make our grief a little more bearable.

The Archbishop of Sydney, His Grace Rev. Dr Anthony Fisher OP invoked prayers and blessings for all of Sri Lanka by immediately arranging a concelebrated High Mass at St Mary's Cathedral with two other Bishops for the repose of the souls of the deceased, consolation and healing of bereaved relatives and the quick recovery of all the injured. Other religious and civil leaders of all denominations attended the service and offered condolences and prayers to the victims, their families and to more than 22 000 Sri Lankan Catholics in Australia.

Coordinated by the Consul-General of Sri Lanka in Sydney Mr Lal Wickrematunge, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Australia HE Somasundaram Skandakumar, Fr Chaminda Wanigasena, chaplain of the Sri Lankan Catholic community in Sydney, organised events to console Sydney families who were devastated by the bombings. More than 2000 people of all denominations attended the Candlelight Vigil organised by the Sri Lankan Consulate in Sydney on the outside lawns of St Mary's Cathedral.

Deeply grieved by the loss of dear Sri Lankans, concerned for the families and relatives caught up in this tragic crime, we of The Ceylon Society of Australia, were devastated, stunned and unable to reconcile with the thought that another tragedy of Sri Lankans killing Sri Lankans has recurred.

Led by President Pauline Gunewardene, members of the Society generously supported the numerous religious and other activities, showing our solidarity to those affected by the violence.

The CSA thanks all those who showed care and concern for the plight of innocent Sri Lankans caught up in this disaster, especially His Grace Anthony Fisher OP, the Archbishop of Sydney, who swiftly invoked prayers and blessings for all of Sri Lanka. Also to other members of the clergy, all religious and civic dignitaries, all Australians and others worldwide for the kindness and concern shown to our Motherland under siege.

We condemn all acts of terrorism where ever they occur. We are acutely aware that there will be more sporadic attacks in coming days. However, it is our earnest hope that Sri Lankan security authorities will exercise all their powers to prevent further carnage and bring the culprits to justice.

Sri Lankans are a resilient people who will not succumb to such disasters. As time heals the wounds and abate the sadness, they will return with their disarming smiles, kindness and friendship to bring back peace and prosperity to their Motherland.

Our Readers write

Thoughts on Daraniyagala and 43 Group

I refer to your cover story on Daraniyagala by Hugh Karunanayake based on an excellent talk given by Srilal Fernando in Melbourne. I visited Richard Gabriel while he had the two paintings of Daraniyagala in his house at Pannipitiya. He was restoring them for Christopher Ondaatje who had purchased them. The lower parts of both paintings had perished probably by standing them on damp floors. One was a nude of a woman who was holding a towel rail and the other a more beautiful and powerful painting of a woman seated on a low bench with her head resting against the wall behind after feeding her child in her arms.

Richard Gabriel told me that the more realistic painting of the woman holding the rail was done by Daraniyagala to refute the claim made by the press that the artists of the 43 Group could not paint properly. At the time, the press was backing Mudaliyar ACGS Amarasekera and his school of painting which produced faithful images of the subjects. If this was so it is more than likely that the painting was done in Sri Lanka. Unless there is a record of Anais Nin had come to Sri Lanka, this being a portrait of her's seems unlikely.

Though not relevant, I must say here that Mudaliyar Amarasekera is often seen as a villain because of the suspicion that his influence made the press belittle the 43 Group after its first exhibition. However, he contributed much towards raising the consciousness of Art in Sri Lanka before the tremendous contribution made by the very creative painters of the 43 Group with disparate styles. What is even more irrelevant, yet very interesting, is that he produced an absolutely exceptional person in his son Douglas. Douglas was himself a painter who lost most of his paintings in a fire in London and did not paint much thereafter. He was a brilliant mathematician, a Cambridge wrangler and a lecturer at the Colombo University, one of the few people in Sri Lanka at the time or even today who had a comfortable grasp of the general theory of relativity, an astronomer, a pianist, drama critique and a writer of short stories.

I am in awe of these creative people and wish I too were one and yet at other times I cannot but wonder at what cost such achievements come. Would it for example preclude such simple pleasures as your enjoyable engagement with your grandchildren?
GAMINI DE SILVA, Mulgrave, Vic 3170.

Looking forward to the journal

I always look forward to receiving the journal which I read enthusiastically. Congratulations on your efforts

and kindest regards to all my colleagues and friends in the association.

D. VINEE ABEYAGUNewardene
Ryde NSW 2112

Excellent reading (The Ceylankan). Keep up the good work.

HUGH ALDONS
Springvale South, VIC 3172 VIC.

Thank you very much for sending us The Ceylankan journal, which I for one, look forward to reading.

MAUREEN DE SARAM
Brooklyn Park, S.A. 5032

May I express my deep appreciation of the joy and deep satisfaction that both my wife and I receive from reading through this very interesting publication.

HOMI JILLA
South Yarra VIC 3141

I rarely, if ever, attend meetings. However, I staunchly support the CSA and I look forward eagerly to the magazine which contains a wealth of information and is a delight to read and possess.

Your views are invaluable!

Do you have a point of view to share with our readers? Can you shed some new light on a topic discussed in the Journal? Is there anything you like or dislike published here and have something constructive to say about it? You can air your views with us. Your opinion is most welcome in the Letters column. Please keep them brief, no more than 500 words, preferably. Letters may be edited because of length and/or content.

Appreciation

The primary object of a student of literature is to be delighted. His duty is to enjoy himself; his efforts should be directed to developing his faculty of appreciation.

Lord David Cecil (Reading as one of the Fine Arts (1949))

The human factor

I have not the slightest hesitation in making the observation that much of British management doesn't seem to understand the importance of the human factor.

Prince Charles - Speech to Parliamentary and Scientific Committee (February 1979)

All I need to make comedy is a park, a policeman and a pretty girl.

Charlie Chaplain - My Autobiography 1964

The building boom that transformed Colombo over 100 years ago

by Hugh Karunanayake

Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was then called, had hardly any commercial or mercantilism during the 19th Century when it was gradually emerging from a peasant society into a plantation economy. There were two major factors which contributed towards the commercialisation of Colombo as a city. The first was the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 which made a tremendous impact on trade relations between the Occident and the Orient. The other significant factor was the construction of the South Western Breakwater enabling the entry of steam ships into Colombo's harbour. Up until then Galle was the main port of Ceylon and the city of Galle was the main center for shipping to and from the country. During most part of the 19th Century, the Galle harbor, apart from being the port of entry and departure for international travel, was also the center of what could be described as a service hub for tourists.

During that time there were only two hotels in Colombo that would serve the needs of international travelers; the Royal Hotel which stood at the site of the present General Post Office in Queen Street, and the Galle Face Hotel, then known as the Galle Face Boarding House. The city of Galle, however, had about half a dozen hotels with desirable

by the Ephraums family and run as New Oriental Hotel. The other major tourist related industry was the gem and jewellery shops of which there were also about ten, all located in the Fort and especially in Middle Street. With the opening of the South Western Breakwater, the first stages of the development of Colombo as a harbour city, commenced. It also heralded the beginning of the decline of the use of the Port of Galle and its related enterprises, as the ship chandlery businesses, and the jewellery and gem traders all moved to Colombo.

Although the first steam ship to traverse the Suez Canal to Colombo "The Wm Miller" arrived at the port of Colombo on 10 February 1870, the facilities for harbouring of such a craft were not fully available. A deputation from the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce presented a petition to the government in September 1870 urging the government for better harbouring facilities. Two months later government plans to expand the Galle harbour were officially abandoned. In the following year, 1871, the walls of the Dutch Fort of Colombo were demolished and the surrounding moats filled. In 1875 the foundation stone for the construction of the South West Breakwater of the Colombo harbour was laid by the visiting Prince of Wales. The completion of the project took a few years and was carried out by Resident Engineer Mr John Kyle under the direction of Sir John Coode the most distinguished harbour engineer in the world. He successfully implemented several harbour and river improvement projects in various parts of the British Empire, including Australia where he planned and oversaw some changes to the gradient of the Yarra River. Through his expertise, the Colombo harbour was facilitated to receive any size of ship traversing the oceans by the 1890s.

The facilities provided by the harbour created a natural demand for greater commercial activity. At the cusp of the new commercialisation was a desire to erect buildings such as those that had been erected in other parts of the Empire. Possibly the first building to herald the late Victorian/Edwardian building boom in the Colombo Fort was the construction of the General Post Office on the site where the Royal Hotel stood. The Royal Hotel was the only hotel in the Fort. Built on neo-classical lines, it was run by a Sinhalese dubasher with the unlikely name of Morris! The GPO was planned by Mr Tunstall an architect and implemented under the supervision of Mr Tomalin of the PWD in the early 1890s. The GPO was the largest



• The GPO building in Colombo that replaced the Royal Hotel. (see photo page 6)

levels of occupancy by visitors arriving in the island. Excepting the Pavilion Hotel run by Mrs Braybrooke, located across the road facing the Ramparts, the others were all located within the Fort of Galle. There was Eglington Hotel in Hospital Street, Loret's Hotel in Middle Street, the Sea View Hotel in Church Street run by the Ephraums family, and the Oriental Company's Hotel also in Church Street, later acquired

building of the time in Colombo and when completed was open to the public for several days during which thousands gazed in wonder at the masterpiece! During the security clamp of the late 20th Century around Presidents House which stands opposite to the GPO, the building had remained unoccupied for many years,



• *A rare photo of the Royal Hotel that was demolished and replaced with the Colombo General Post office building. (photo on page 5)*

and remains so now. A sad finale to a building with a glorious past. It is heartening to note that there are no plans to demolish this splendid piece of colonial architecture which is part of our national heritage.

In about 1895 the Fort Land and Building Company acquired the block of land on York Street where National Grindlays Bank stands right up to the road facing the jetty. At the time the upper part of York Street consisted of small shops mainly jewellery and curio shops. The Company demolished the existing small buildings and constructed Victoria Arcade and the buildings in which the Grindlays Bank now occupy. On the opposite side of York Street stood Cargills then a single storied shop. It was previously a residence for Mr Phillip Sluyskens, a Dutch resident who moved to his country house in Kelaniya after Cargills purchased his house. Walker and Sons the pre-eminent engineering firm even then, were occupying a small building at the Fort end of Main Street, which they demolished and constructed a large elegant three storied building completed in 1911. Walkers were the contractors for a new building for Cargills Ltd and their newly constructed building in Main Street were let out temporarily to Cargills. A large wooden carving of Minerva the Goddess was found during the construction of Cargills and it was placed in a niche in the new building and could be seen to this day.

In about 1915, the new building for Mr Abdul Cafoor, the gem merchant, was constructed in Main Street, and from the time of its opening, the firm of HW Cave and Sons were the principal tenants, having moved from Amens Corner where the Bogala Building stands in Upper Chatham Street, facing the Bours Building. The Bogala building was originally

the property of Sir Charles Henry de Soysa, the first Ceylonese millionaire. Sadly, the Gafoor building has passed its use by date and in recent years rendered unsuitable for occupation due to instability. Measures were afoot to stabilise the building, but this writer is not aware of the outcomes.

Now here is the story behind Australia Building, a building in the heart of Colombo named after Australia, a quizzical name which kept many wondering about its background. In about 1895 the old Millers building on York Street, a single story unkempt building, was auctioned. The buyer was Kerri Davies an Australian timber merchant who had business connections with Mr R B Carson, the founder



• *The Company demolished the existing small buildings on York St (above) and constructed Victoria Arcade and the buildings in which the Grindlays Bank now occupy (below).*



of Carson Cumberbitch and Co. Mr Davies constructed the new building which was to house Millers Ltd and the building was named Australia Building to honour the nationality of its owner..

Bristol Hotel was under the management of Mr WST Saunders who decided to add a new wing with a theatre but the construction proved to be unsuitable and the wing was used to create more bedrooms for the Hotel which was then very upmarket. Incidentally, the Bristol Hotel was the first building in Colombo to boast of ceiling fans. The honour of being the first building to be supplied with electricity goes to the Colombo Club on Galle Face

which was "electrified" in 1893. The Bristol Hotel followed shortly thereafter.

St Andrews Church stood on Prince Street, and moved to its new premises on Galle Road Kollupitiya in 1912. Its site was used to construct the building of another large departmental store Whiteaway Laidlaw and Co already well established in places like Hong Kong, Saigon and Singapore. Part



• *The new building for Mr Abdul Cafoor, the gem merchant, was constructed in Main Street replacing small shops (top photo). From the time of its opening, the firm of HW Cave and Sons were the principal tenants with Cargills, Walker & Sons, Millers Co. and several other department stores coming in not long after.*

of the Whiteaway building was sold to Freudenberg and Co to subsidise cost of construction. Soon after, Harrisons and Crosfield whose predecessors Crosfield, Lampard and Co occupied a site on Victoria Arcade sought to construct a new building. The new Harrisons and Crosfield building, five stories high, brought the Fort landscape to new heights. All these new structures which appeared during the last decade of the 19th Century and the first two decades of the 20th Century, gave Colombo a new look and an air of sophistication and confidence which did the British Empire proud.

Many, if not all the major buildings around Colombo, were constructed by the engineering firm of Walker Sons and Co established in 1854. The two chief contractors of Walkers Messrs Wapiche Marikkar and UDS Gunasekera were largely responsible for providing labour and materials for construction of the buildings under supervision of Engineers and Architects. Wapiche was the key contractor for the construction of the



• **Wapiche Marikkar**



• **UDS Gunasekera**

Galle Face Hotel and the Colombo Museum. The latter building designed by Architect T Reid. The design was considered so attractive that the Government House in Fiji was also modelled on the same lines.

Both Gunasekera and Marikkar acquired considerable wealth and their descendants too were immersed in fame and

fortune. Gunasekera's grandson was Sir Ernest de Silva founding Chairman of the Bank of Ceylon, philanthropist, and owner of broad acres. Marikkar's grandson Sir Razil Fareed was a legislator and merchant.

In 1904 the company published a booklet containing testimonials and illustrations of some of the principal buildings erected by them in Ceylon of which many were in Colombo. They included Australia Building, the Victoria Building, the P & O office, the National Bank of India Ltd, Messrs Cargills Building, Whiteaway Laidlaw and Co, Miller and Co.

The role of Walkers in the rebuilding of Colombo is little remembered today, but the strikingly beautiful Victorian and Edwardian architecture that dominates the Fort landscape does the country proud, and the buildings now preserved for posterity. Fortunately many of the buildings referred to, have been left intact, with Commercial development in recent decades mainly occurring along the Galle Road and Duplication Road areas. The Fort area being subject to security containment due to the location of Presidents's house within the Fort, has in recent decades seen some unintended consequences in the preservation of the beautiful old Victorian and Edwardian structures. It has to be remembered that the concept of the multi-department store as was seen in

Cargills Ltd, Miller Ltd, Whiteaway Laidlaw and Co, Colombo Apothecaries Ltd now seems to be obsolete. In its day and age when Britannia 'ruled the waves' and also "waived the rules" products from Britain totally dominated the market. Those days are now long past, and so are the products from the Metropolitan power that fed those large departmental stores. Post-World War 2 developments saw the emergence of Japan, Korea, China and other countries of the East emerging as the dominant leaders of markets for consumables. The supermarket concept has arrived and is bound to dominate commercial activity relating to the household sector for years to come. The significance of the Colombo harbour as a passenger port also has greatly diminished with cheaper, faster, air travel, now being the popular mode of

international travel. However, the challenge is for our urban planners to make a viable "heritage precinct" within the Fort retaining the Department Store as a feature of the City's heritage. Harrods in London, and the House of Tang in Singapore are two colonial departmental stores that have withstood the challenges of modernism, and perhaps the time is opportune for us to take a closer look at similar opportunities. Despite the onward march of time, the old Fort of Colombo holds some treasured memories for those of us who lived through that quiet, almost forgotten, genteel era and the time may be ripe to preserve the spirit of a bygone age to be savoured by present and future generations.



Trincomalee Harbour - shipwreck re-floated

Sunken British WWII ship ss Sagaing refloated by Sri Lanka's navy to make room in Trincomalee harbour.

World War II British passenger ship sunk off north-east Sri Lanka has been refloated, 75 years after being damaged during a Japanese bombing raid.

The ss Sagaing was anchored in Trincomalee Harbour when it was hit by a bomb on April 9, 1942, and abandoned due to a fire on board.

On August 24, 1943 the damaged ship was sunk to be used as a pier for other naval ships.



• *ss Sagaing as it originally appeared before it was sunk during WWII.*



• *ss Sagaing is refloated by the Sri Lankan Navy in Trincomalee Harbour.*

Photos: Wikipedia

In September 2017 Sri Lanka's navy was tasked with refloating the wreck — which was submerged more than 10 metres underwater — to make room for expanding berthing facilities in the harbour.

The Eastern Naval Command unit carried out the task by strengthening the ship's internal framework A and building an artificial side to "dewater" the ship and recover lost buoyancy.

The wreck started to ascend to the surface on March 22, the navy said in a statement.

Sri Lanka had 98 diving sailors working on permanent deployment on the project.

Source: ABC News (Australia)

Intelligence and Truth

Intelligence is quickness to apprehend as distinct from ability, which is capacity to act wisely on the thing apprehended.

— Alfred North Whitehead (1861 - 1947)

Myth and Morals

Without doubt the greatest injury of all was done by basing morals on myths. For, sooner or later, myth is recognised for what it is, and disappears. Then morality loses the foundation on which it has been built.

Lord Samuel Louis (1947)

I believe the intellectual life of the whole western society is increasingly being split into two polar groups ... Literary intellectuals at one pole—at the other scientists, and as the most representative, the physical scientists. Between the a gulf of mutual incomprehension.

C.P.Snow (1905 - 1980)



A CALL TO REMEMBER by Somasiri Devendra

A Sri Lankan way of honouring those who fought for us

It's a hundred years since the first World War ended.

It was called "the war to end all wars", a war "to preserve Democracy". It was, in fact, fought for nothing more than the needs of a handful of European countries wanting yet bigger pieces of the global pie, fighting each other for it, or to deny it to others.

The gladiators? Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, the Russian Empire, the Turkish Empire. Swept up in their wake and caught up without an option: Belgium, Italy, Serbia, Bosnia and the British French and German footholds in North Africa. It was a purely regional matter that, due to rampant colonialism, mushroomed into a global phenomenon. British possessions all over the world, and British alliances were drawn into the conflict – from Australia/New Zealand, India/Ceylon/Burma, South Africa, Canada, Nigeria and, finally, even reluctant America. South Africans and Nigerians fought in Africa, Indians in Turkey and the Middle East, Anzac troops in Gallipoli and France, Canadians and Americans on the Western Front. Only China, South America and Scandinavia had the sense to keep away.

And, thus, a regional "turf" war became a "World War"

Altogether about ten million died. Unknown numbers of bodies lay unrecovered in the mud where they had fallen. Afterwards, War Cemeteries commemorated them in serried ranks of headstones and crosses to give solace to the living kin; and War Memorials, too, to confer a belated dignity on them.

It seems to us, now, a meaningless war but it held some meaning for the men – from Ceylon and other colonial outposts – who marched away to die in another's war in a foreign land. Was it duty, honour, glory, patriotism, love of adventure or just a little money for a better life that called them? Whatever it was, they were all-too-human beings driven by all-too-human feelings, and failings. And, for the last 100 years, we have remembered them, as humans: humans like us. Humans who fought and died in wars ever since. As we remember our own war dead in our own war; perhaps, in years to come, that sacrifice, too, may seem to have been in vain.

I write these words, a hundred years since the guns fell silent (those guns, at least) – not to glorify that War (or any other war) – but as a tribute to those men who fought for a Cause, either of their own choosing or because they had to. A soldier is the only citizen who is called upon – and paid for – to kill and die for his country. So this is my tribute to those who died and for the few who came back.

And Politicians and Generals be damned.

Let me begin with Numbers. How many persons recorded as "Ceylonese" enlisted for war service? The figures vary. The website "Kabristan Archives" (<https://www.kabristan.org.uk/>) lists 2,351 (1,218+1,133) in its "Ceylon Roll of Honour", quoting the "Times of India". But in the website's own alphabetical index, of those who served in the War and are recorded as residents of Ceylon, totals 6,640. Sergei De Silva-Ranasinghe, Military Historian, quoted the "Times of Ceylon Christmas Number" of 1917 "Ceylon Roll of Honour" which lists 1250 who enlisted in Ceylon, 351 who signed up in England, 438 who enlisted on their own account and 156 volunteers funded by the "Times Fund": a total of 2195. Dr. C.G. Uragoda, I understand, quotes a much greater figure – from a 140-page book titled "Ceylon roll of honour. A record of service in the Great War, 1914–1918", also published by Times of Ceylon – which lists 25,200 Ceylonese who took part in the war, of whom 103 were in the Roll of Honour and two won the Victoria Cross. I must admit, I have



• Two soldiers of the Ceylon Planters' Rifle Corps who acted as Lt. Gen. William Birdwood's bodyguard throughout the Gallipoli campaign.

not seen the document. Since Ceylonese had fought under the Colony's flag and also under those of Britain, India, France, South Africa etc. the correct number may never be known.

But numbers do not matter. What matters is how we remember them.

This we do in many ways – formal and informal; in monument and in memory. The monuments are scattered throughout the country, ranging from the Cenotaph in Colombo to a Gas Lamp at Padukka; from a wooden board in Dikoya to numerous plaques in Churches and Schools. But it is not of them that I will speak.

I will speak of only how a day was set apart to remember them with honour: "Remembrance Day" or "Poppy Day", which we yet observe today. And of how the good intention of remembering those who died in past battles nearly led to another battle, "The Battle of the Flowers", in a peculiarly Sri Lankan way of 'Remembering'.

The War ended with the Armistice signed by all parties at 11.00 AM on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. The day is yet observed as "Remembrance Day" by those who are the lineal descendants of those who fought and those who died, in the Allied cause. But there was no formal establishment of a Day of Remembrance till, a few years later, when a movement began in different countries: Britain, USA, France and the Commonwealth. In the USA, Prof. Moina Michael is credited with the use of the Poppy flower as the symbol, while in France the credit goes to Madam Guerin. The choice of the poppy as the symbol springs from John McCrae's poem written in 1915 –

*If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
On Flanders' fields*

In Ceylon, yet a Crown Colony, we took the lead from the Royal British Legion (for British veterans) and its alter ego the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (for Commonwealth veterans). British veterans and Commonwealth veterans: united in war, divided in memory. The sale of poppies began in different parts of the world on different dates. The sale was institutionalised in Britain and the Commonwealth in 1921 and the funds raised by the sales used for the welfare of ex-servicemen. In Ceylon, Poppy sales began in 1925.

"Poppy Day" here was commemorated in true Colonial style. Patronage flowed from the Head of State, His Excellency the Governor, although the conduct of the Poppy sales was in the hands of a Committee of citizens. These citizens were largely the wives of British Civil Servants and other British residents of the country. At the stroke of 11.00 AM, everything came to a halt. Vehicles stopped on the road, those walking stopped, doffed their hats and bowed their heads in prayer. School children stood

up at "Attention" behind their desks. The Police saw to it that all these Colonial rituals were followed throughout the land. Then, the ladies descended onto the streets, the schools, the workplaces and sold Poppies. Wearing a Poppy was 'voluntary', but none dared refuse. Everyone wore it, from H.E. himself to the humble rickshaw wallah. Poppies were not only sold on the street, but at other fundraising sporting events such as Cricket and Rugby fixtures and the Ceylon Turf Club race meets. Poppy Week culminated in the Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph erected at Galle Face (in spite of a move to have it erected in Galle). The Grand Finale was a formal Dinner-Dance (also a fund-raiser) at which the Governor outlined the work of the Committee, the finances and how they were disbursed and plans for the future.

It was this very Colonial slant to Remembrance Day that led to a movement against it.

In the 1930s politics in Ceylon was in ferment. There arose a feeling, among Ceylonese veterans, that insufficient funds were allocated to Ceylonese veterans and that the bulk of the funds were being repatriated. Dissatisfaction began within the Poppy Day Committee itself which led to the Ceylonese members, led by a veteran, Aelian Pereira, breaking away from the Committee to set up a rival Remembrance Day where the "Suriya Mal" was used as the symbol: a not untypical Sri Lankan way of

*I write these words, a hundred years
since the guns fell silent (those guns,
at least) – not to glorify that War (or
any other war) – but as a tribute to
those men who fought for a Cause...*

dissent. And thus began "The Battle of the Flowers". The "Suriya Mal" movement created an association by the name of the "Ceylonese / Ceylon Ex-Service Men's Association". The "Ferguson's Directory" for 1932, listing the "Principal events: 1931-32" records its formation in February 1932. Its committee, with both ex-servicemen and sympathizers, comprised: President: Aelian Pereira; Vice-Presidents: A.E. Goonesinha, S.W. Dassanaikie; Secretary: N. Saravanamuttu; Treasurer: C.W. Nicholas; Committee: R.L. Pereira, K.C.; S.W.R. Dias Bandaranaike, Dr. R. Saravanamuttu, I. David, M.S.J. Akbar, G.G. Ponnambalam, Merrill Pereira, E.B. Weerakoon, C. Selwyn Samarasingha, C.W.C. de Silva, Mervyn J. De Mel, Wilfred Goonesekera, W. Abeysinghe, C.W. Edirisuriya, C. Arndt,

A.E.Goonesinha, S.W. Dassanaiké; W.Abeysinghe, C.W.Edirisuriya, C.Arndt, R. Aluvihare and P. Givendrasinghe.

This was an association of independent persons. In fact, it appears that the group comprised not only some ex-servicemen but also a large leavening of Doctors, Lawyers, Civil Servants and Politicians – a grouping that we would today call “Civil Society”. A closer look at these names reveals interesting information: the group includes Sinhalese, Tamils, Burghers and Chetties; Buddhists, Hindus, Roman Catholics, Christians and Muslims; Doctors, Lawyers, Planters, Trade Unionists, Public Servants and Municipal Councilors.

Unsurprisingly, the common factor that seems to have brought these people together, and what they had in common with Ex-Servicemen, was “Anti-Imperialism”. “Poppy Day” was only the fuse.

It is best described in the words of Prof. Michael Roberts: “Every year the British



Unsurprisingly, the common factor that seems to have brought these people together, and what they had in common with Ex-Servicemen, was “Anti-Imperialism”. “Poppy Day” was only the fuse.

establishment commemorated Armistice Day (the end of WWI) by selling poppies and donating the proceeds to veterans. The Youth Congress president, Aelian Pereira, who was also a member of the committee that organised the Poppy Day activities, complained that Ceylonese veterans weren't getting their fair share of the funds. In 1931 he formed his own committee to sell a local sunflower, the Suriya Mal, and donate the proceeds to Ceylonese veterans. But he had no following. Susan (de Silva) and some others in the Youth League provided the personnel that he needed.

The first campaign made quite a splash. Worried by this rival, the official Poppy Day committee came to terms with Aelian Pereira, who then withdrew from his own committee. The Suriya Mal organisation, in the words of Vernon Gunasekera, ‘just fell into our laps.’ The Youth League activists carried out the next campaign on their own with bolder slogans. The principals and teachers in Buddhist schools around Colombo provided the backbone for the new organisation. The president of the Suriya Mal committee, Doreen Young, the English principal of Ananda Balika Vidyalaya, recruited many of her teachers and students to the cause.

With the withdrawal of Aelian Pereira from the movement (again, in a not untypical Sri Lankan way) it “fell into the laps” of anti-imperialist, nationalist political leaders: many of whom were members of what was to become the Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP). This was to have an impact of post-war Ceylon, too.

The website “www.worldheritage.org” links the Independence movement and Suriya Mal initiative: “In 1933 a British teacher, Doreen Young Wickramasinghe, (Mrs. S.A. Wickramasinghe) wrote an article, ‘The Battle of the Flowers’ which appeared in the Ceylon Daily News and exposed the absurdity of forcing Sri Lankan schoolchildren to purchase poppies to help British veterans at the expense of their own, which caused her to be vilified by her compatriots.

“The South Colombo Youth League now got involved in the Suriya-Mal Movement and revived it on a new anti-imperialist and anti-war basis. Yearly, until the Second World War, young men and women sold Suriya flowers on the streets on Armistice Day in competition with the Poppy sellers. The purchasers of the Suriya Mal were generally from the poorer sections of society and the funds collected were not large. But the movement provided a rallying point for the anti-imperialist minded youth of the time. An attempt was made by the British colonial authorities to curb the movement's effectiveness through the ‘Street Collection Regulation Ordinance’. Doreen Young was elected first president of the Suriya Mal movement at a meeting held at the residence of Wilmot Perera in Horana. Terence de Zilva and Robin Ratnam were elected Joint Secretaries, and Roy de Mel Treasurer.”

The LSSP was a party that was international and revolutionary in outlook, not concerned only with nationalist and communalist issues. It emerged as the leading voice against Imperialism and War and, even as late as 1942, tried to influence British military personnel.

“A MESSAGE FROM THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS OF CEYLON”

“Comrades in the Army, Navy and Air Force”

“...now you have been brought to this island of Ceylon far, far away from your own country and your homes, to lay down your lives for what your rulers call ‘Freedom’. What freedom did you British workers enjoy at home?... This war, we have said, is not your war. It is not our war too... We are not interested in the defence of a country which does not belong to us. This country does not belong to you either. It belongs to the Imperialist bosses who exploit us here just as they exploit you at home. They are our common enemies.”

The Suriya Mal movement, which had begun as the initiative of an ex-Serviceman had fallen into the lap of Left-wing, National, Labour and Buddhist movements. The Suriya Mal campaigners played a significant part on relief activities arising from the

Malaria Epidemic in the mid-1930s. But it did not receive the patronage of Colonial Administrators and the Poppy Day Committee and, hence, it is hardly likely that the sale of Suriya Mal would have been permitted under war conditions with the outbreak of WW II.

However, the sale of Poppies and the ceremonial rituals of Remembrance Day continued, with a new urgency engendered by fears of another World War. However, when the war caught up with Ceylon, such public ceremonies ceased to be held after the outbreak of WWII. The very War Memorial erected at Galle Face in memory of those who died in WWI was dismantled as it was a prominent landmark in event of an attack and kept in storage, till re-erected many years after the war at its present location. Poppy Day would have been celebrated in official institutions and in military camps but it would have been observed in a muted manner. Units of the Ceylon Defence Force (CDF) were under mobilisation and they were deployed in many a theatre of war abroad. The long arm of anti-Imperialist feelings fuelled, in part, by the "Suriya Mal" Campaign led to a brief mutiny among Ceylonese troops on the Cocos-Keeling Islands which led to the execution, after a Court Martial, of three mutineers. As Wikipedia records: "No Sri Lankan combat regiment was deployed by the British in a combat situation after the Cocos Islands Mutiny".

The end of the war heralded the return of WWII veterans to "civvy street" and the concern shifted to those who were now left without a job. The emphasis shifted from WWI veterans to WWII veterans. A "Joint Service Resettlement Committee" was appointed, and it conducted classes for those who wished to qualify for a trade. An "Essential Services Labour Corps" (ESLC) to provide employment for unemployed war veterans was formed and deployed to open up lands for colonisation in the Dry Zone. For a more lasting follow-up a "Ceylon Ex-Servicemen's Association" was formed in 1944 from which Sri Lanka Ex-Servicemen's Association (SLESA) has, so far, considered itself to have descended.

The LSSP, having experienced the euphoria of mobilising anti-colonial feelings among ex-servicemen in the Suriya Mal movement attempted to re-enter the scene, by appealing to the frustrations of the veterans of the Second World War. In September 1946 a body called "The Ceylon Legion of Ex-Servicemen" came into being and it elected Dr. N.M.Perera as President. At a later meeting it passed a Resolution to the effect that it "demanded" that ex-servicemen either be given suitable jobs or paid a weekly maintenance allowance and that, if this were not done, "direct action" would be taken. The Resolution also condemned the arrest of Dr.N.M.Perera on 22 October. Dr. Perera stated that the Legion was non-political and not sponsored by the LSSP; that "suitable jobs" did not mean those "which

would dump them in the jungles of Minneriya" (a reference to the ESLC). He concluded that "his personal hope was that this organisation would be the nucleus of a Ceylonese Red Army". At the General Election for Ceylon's first Parliament, the LSSP emerged as the largest single opposition party and Dr. Perera became the Leader of the Opposition.

The euphoria of "Independence" pushed all talk of Suriya Mal, and Red (White and Blue?) armies to the back burner. The First World War faded from memory as the Second took a more prominent place. "Poppy Day" was observed but in a muted form: there was no Governor to give the lead and the new Government did not care a damn. Yet the memory of those who fought and those who died was kept alive, particularly in the new Armed Forces which were led by British Commanders. It was fitting that the Armed Forces should have kept the flame alive. Gradually, the Ceylon Ex-Servicemen's Association (CESA) – a purely voluntary organisation then – emerged as the "keeper of the flame", along with the "Comrades of the Second Great War" and were responsible for the sale of poppies and keeping alive the link with "British Commonwealth Ex-Services League"(BCEL). By 1966 the "Comrades" had ceased to exist, and the CESA emerged as the sole bearer of the flame. In 1976 CESA was incorporated as "Sri Lanka Ex-Servicemen's Association" by Act of Parliament.

Role and function defined

Thus, during the period 1946-1976, the role and functions of SLESA had been defined. Its primary concern was the welfare of WW II veterans and any WWI veterans: the "needy, ageing, infirm and destitute ex-servicemen and their dependents" who may have been alive. To carry out this duty, to "provide financial assistance, medical aid and nourishment and in general to ensure the welfare" of the ex-servicemen and their dependents, the Association was provided with a regular income, namely, donations and contributions to the War Charities Fund (U.K.) and collections from the sale of Poppies: Poppies gifted by the League were converted to income by sales on Poppy Day. All proceeds were/ devoted for the welfare of Sri Lankan veterans. The link with the War Charities Fund ensured that the Association "kept the faith" with those who had risked their lives. It was no mean achievement.

I will not speak, here, of the valuable services rendered to ex-servicemen by SLESA today. Readers will find it all recorded in "Footprints on the Sands of Time", the history of SLESA published last year. Much of the material in this paper has been taken from it and it is a matter of pride that a Sri Lankan Association with no State financing is doing so much for former members of the Armed Forces including, now, those members whose wars were neither of the World Wars. I urge all readers who have the interests of our own veterans of today to read this book.

I would like to leave you with a thought:
Now, a hundred years on, whom shall we remember
on Remembrance Day ?

Those who fought and those who died
fighting for "King and Country", for "National
Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity"? Yes. Yes, of
course. They, whom we sent out to die for us. But
only them? I think not. What about all those who also
died fighting for a cause which we cannot sympathise
with? Those who died fighting us in the Insurrection
of 1971 and in the Eelam struggle? Were they also
not children of this land? Were they not fighting for
this land? Do not their shattered limbs enrich this
soil? Were they less than those who died for another's
cause in another's land? Were they not our friends,
children, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, neighbours,
colleagues – frail human beings like us? WERE THEY

NOT US? Think how – Dutugemunu honoured the
man whom he defeated in battle.

After the American Civil War, winners and
the losers respect each other today.

During the First World War, troops of both
sides stopped firing and celebrated Christmas together.

After the Second, Sri Lanka urged the world
to treat the Japanese with love, not hate.

This year, the Cambridge Students' Union
argued that "all lives lost and affected by war" and
not just war veterans should be commemorated on
the Day.

The time for forgiveness has come.

At the going down of the sun,

And in the morning...

.... let us remember them...

ALL OF THEM.



(Courtesy of Wikipedia)

Prince Vijaya

A Play in One Act

by Narendranath Chitty

Dramatis Personae: King Sinhabahu; Prince Vijaya;
Guru; Prince Vijaya's Equerry; Queen Kuveni's Equerry.

Scene I: *The royal palace of King Sinhabahu, in Sinhapura (capital of the ancient kingdom of Bhurishestra) located on the river Bhāgirathi-Hooghly (Bengal). The story unfolds around the year 543 BCE. The heir to the throne, Prince Vijaya, attended by his ageing guru and equerry, are in audience with the king.*

KING SINHABAHU:

You do not know, Vijaya, the grief a father feels
when he disowns a son,
but when a son – a prince – has misbehaved
it is his father's duty to censure.

Our Royal Court decided that you must be sent
with a hundred of your vassals in a ship
until the locks we shaved from half your head

do reappear – and all your fault is bleached.
Vijay, Vijay, my son, this could well be
the last encounter between you and me.
The seas are soaring at the monsoon's height
and likely you'll be sailing to your death.
However, boy, if you survive, return
and be your father's son, a prince, once more.

PRINCE VIJAYA:

My father, at this late moment I entreat
Your Majesty to see how I've been slandered
at Court, by worthless enemies
who I could name, but do refrain, for they
are near and dear to Thy Good Majesty.
To gain a throne, perhaps to gain mere aught.....
these courtiers intrigued – to discredit
your son, my Lord, and have succeeded well.
I do not plead for mercy for a deed
I do not think I've done.

I merely ask that Thou review the case for justice' sake.

KING SINHABAHU:

Vijay, we dearly wish we could refrain,
but the Royal Court's decree must remain.
Your readied ship will sail today, within the hour
though its departure rends our heart in twain.

PRINCE VIJAYA:

But promise me, my King, to hold inquiry
and ascertain if the jasmines that surround
Thy Majesty, do harbour wasps
that sting and blind thy hapless royal eye.

KING SINHABAHU:

We shall, my son, but vow to us you sail
with care and will soon return.....

EXIT PRINCE VIJAYA AND HIS EQUERRY.

GURU:

My Lord!

I was Prince Vijaya's tutor when he stood
no higher than the throne Thou sits upon.

I have known his mischief and his bounty long
 and must entreat Thee, rumours disbelieve
 about the dealings of Thine favourite son.
 Perchance they hold some truth – still disbelieve!
 For know that once Thine Vijaya's gone
 to find his rest among the warring waves,
 no second Vijaya, no second golden prince,
 will reappear to churn Thine loving breast.
 This month a raging seas has shown no mercy
 on harmless fisherfolk who cast their nets
 so near the shore the land could be discerned.
 Waves are blind, a prince is but a pauper
 when cradled by their angry crests, that dash
 with wicked sense their burden on the rocks.
 And so must Vijaya die, to smudge the foam,
 that surges where the waves are torn by cruel crags,
 with royal blood, his corpse athrong with crabs?
KING SINHABAHU:
 It is for justice' sake I send my son, but know,
 the gods will not be merciless.
 Vijaya will pay his penance and return
 to be our scion in this stead once more.

Scene II: The deck of a sailing vessel in the Bay of Bengal. Prince Vijaya is conversing with his Guru and his Equerry.

PRINCE VIJAYA:
 So many days our ship has battled sea and storm.
 So many men, my friends, the gods have claimed.
 So much of hunger and of sickness have we known,
 and yet, no aug of life.
 Our locks have grown, the sea has bleached our sin,
 as it chalks deadwood upon the beach.
 My father 'waits his son's return at home
 and even so the gales with ghastly intone preach.
 Wind screams and tears at clothes and sails alike.
 It brings wet rain to wash the salt away
 that every wave returns, to burn our eyes.
 I would return to be my father's son – and rule
 my father's land the day his great heart dies.
GURU:
 That will not be.
 Vijaya, your ship by stormy wind
 was steered far to the southern sea,
 The monsoon blows towards the south, my Prince,
 and in the angry seas our final rest we'll find.
PRINCE VIJAYA:
 Is there no hope at all that we may reach
 the lower plains of Hindh, some southern port,
 or failing which, some brave new land,
 quite unexplored, a welcome haven for our boat?
 I think of Lanka, King Ravana's citadel,
 where Sita languished in times now long gone by
 until that king to Rama's onslaught fell,
 tell me, my Guru, does this old legend lie?
GURU:
 There is a chance we drift south-west

to bank our boat on India's lower coast.
 But mark my words, brave Prince, the chance at best
 is small, and all, I think, is lost.
PRINCE VIJAYA:
 What is that cheer, that shout,
 that rises from the lookout's post?
 I pray it's land!
 Perhaps God Indra favours us and guides
 our ship away from death into His certain hand.
PRINCE VIJAYA'S EQUERRY:
 He's spotted land towards the setting sun!
PRINCE VIJAYA:
 Land!
 We're saved!
 By all the gods!
 Is it our India, noble Guru, can you tell?
 And do you know by sighting it from far?
GURU:
 That can I do if I peruse the heavens
 when skies are clear and stars are brave.

Scene III The coast of Mannar, Sri Lanka. Vijaya has disembarked with his entourage and stands on the red laterite soil.

PRINCE VIJAYA:
 This is a wondrous land my lords – for you and me!
 See how this red dry earth, like powder, stains my palms.
 See! Red palms, red palms! *Tambapanni!*
 And look, the palm trees, offer us their fruit, their golden
 alms.
 See how the sea is calm around the bay
 and how the beach is massed with fairy shells.
 Shells speak of life quite aeons old and play
 their eerie ageless ode to Nature that compels.
 And look, see the coloured birds of shiny feather
 who trill and warble all day long.
 Do they converse but with one another,
 or for our pleasure is their song?
GURU:
 It is some god's abode, my Prince,
 I fear we desecrate and shall be punished soon
 by some strange sprite,
 some dark creature of the moon.
 The night has fallen and the sky's review
 says India's to the north.
 This land to me and you is new
 and more, it's known by none I know or knew.
PRINCE VIJAYA:
 Then shall we know and live in it, make it our home!
 It is too beautiful to leave, too rich to lose!
[Sound of Drumming]
 Stay!
 What disturbs the shrill sharp serenade
 of chirping crickets?
PRINCE VIJAYA'S EQUERRY:
 Drums, my Prince, beaten by human hands,
 or worse, by devils, angered by our rude adventure

within their fair domain.
 Wait!
 I see within this plantain grove a movement.
 Look!
 A form appears!
 A human maid bedecked with blossoms, adorned with shells!
 A nymph, a fay, a god!
 Or what?
 My spirit trembles.
 Stay, stay!
 Do not advance fair creature, or harm will fall upon your person by this sword, I say.
QUEEN KUWENI'S EQUERRY:
 Your sword, Equerry, is harmless in your hand and you'll stand still until I do command.
PRINCE VIJAYA'S EQUERRY:
 My hand, my sword!
 They will not move at all!
 My Prince, my Lord!
 Run to the camp and arm
 or else this witch will cast a spell
 that ties you down with unseen cord.
QUEEN KUWENI'S EQUERRY:
 Brave Prince, my mistress, Great Queen Kuweni, has ordered that I lead Thee and this aged man, to her Rock Palace in the Flowered Forest, where a welcome feast awaits your pleasure.
PRINCE VIJAYA:
 And who is Kuweni?
 And how might she know me?
GURU:
 She's a witch, my Prince, some devil sprite, whose humour we've disturbed by eating fruit and lighting fires – some demon of the night.
QUEEN KUWENI'S EQUERRY:
 My mistress knows the history of all things.
 She has a crystal-mind that in its diamond facets can see and know the varied scenes of life.
 She shares the secrets that the mountains store within their larva core.
 She knows the song the bee sings having kissed the violet bloom.
 She shares Nature's silent secrets.
 The lore that Nature knows and hides within her forests, in dark musty caves,
 she owns. For Kuweni knows all
 and has power over all this land.
PRINCE VIJAYA:
 Where are her people then?
 And where her cities?
 Where are the roads that must boast great chariots?
 And where the trade, the sounds and songs of life that must abound where such a sovereign reigns?
QUEEN KUWENI'S EQUERRY:
 Her fairy city within the living forest lies.
 It's hidden from the stranger's searching eyes,
 As cobwebs hide behind their dewy strands,

the gateway to some twilight fairy land.
 And only I can guide you to her royal throne
 of be-scalloped gold,
 and to her waiting feast
 of Lanka's fruit – the fruit the songbirds eat
 to sweet'n their melody and height'n their hue.
 Come Royal Prince, come learned Guru and be honoured guests
 at Kuweni's feast in Kuweni's forest home.

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This play was written by Narendranath Chitty in 1967 as a student at Trinity College, Kandy.



Who thinks this stuff up?

- Venison for dinner again? Oh deer!
- How does Moses make tea? Hebrews it.
- England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.
- I tried to catch some fog, but I mist.
- They told me I had type A blood, but it was a Typo.
- I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.
- Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.
- I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.
- I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.
- This girl said she recognised me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore.
- When chemists die, they barium.
- I'm reading a book about antigravity. I just can't put it down..
- I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.
- Why were the Indians here first? They had reservations.
- I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.
- Did you hear about the cross eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?
- When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.
- Broken pencils are pointless.
- What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary? A thesaurus.
- I dropped out of communism class because of lousy Marx.
- I got a job at a bakery because I kneaded dough.
- Velcro: what a rip off!
- Don't worry about old age; it doesn't last.

Brief biographies of Classical Writers and Historians who commented on Sri Lanka – Part VIII



By M. Asoka T. De Silva

The author is Treasurer of CSA's Colombo Chapter and is a retired scientist who has written more than 100 research papers, including books. Many of his scientific papers have been published in prestigious journals worldwide. This is the eighth in the series written exclusively for The Ceylankan.

Sir, Henry Charles (1807-1872)



Henry Charles Sir was a Barrister-At-Law of Lincoln's Inn, and Late Deputy Queens Advocate for the Southern Circuit in the Island of Ceylon. He was also a writer. He was the son of Henry Charles Sirr Snr., Town Mayor of Dublin and Eliza D'Arcy. His older brother was Rev Joseph D'Arcy Sirr. He is perhaps best known for writing 'Ceylon and the Cingalese', a book published in

two volumes in 1850 covering the history, government and religion; the antiquities, institutions, revenue and capabilities of the Island; and a full account of the late Rebellion, its origin and its consequences; with anecdotes illustrating the manners and customs of the people. The book was widely regarded as an authoritative account of life in Ceylon. It was cited by Jules Verne in his classic *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, where in Chapter 2, the book's narrator Professor Aronnax tells the reader that while searching for a description of Ceylon in Captain Nemo's library aboard the *Nautilus*, 'I found a book by H.C. Sirr, Esq, entitled *Ceylon and the Cingalese*'. Sirr also served as British Vice-Consul in Hong Kong from 1843. He described his experiences in another book titled *China and the Chinese*.

Soleyman (851 AD)



Soleyman was an Arab merchant who compiled the 1st Part of the publication titled 'Voyages of the Two Mohametans', who had travelled in India and China at the beginning of the 9th Century narrating and describing countries in between and their trading.

Soleyman had described the 'Sea of Herkand', as it lay between Laccadives (Sri Lanka) and the Maldives.

Solinus Poyhistor (Gaius Julius Solinus, 3rd Century AD)

Gaius Julius Solinus, better known as Solinus Polyhistor, was a Latin grammarian and compiler, who probably flourished in the early 3rd century. History scholar Theodor Mommsen dates him to

the middle of the 3rd century. He was the author of *De mirabilibus mundi* (The wonders of the world) which circulated both under the title *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (Collection of Curiosities), and *Polyhistor*; but the latter title was favoured by the author. The work is indeed a description of curiosities in a chorographical framework. *Adventus*, to whom it is dedicated, is identified with *Oclatinus Adventus*. It contains a short description of the ancient world, with remarks on historical, social, religious and natural history questions. The greater part is taken from Pliny's *Natural History* and the geography of *Pomponius Mela*.

A greatly revised version of his original text had been made, which perhaps is now thought to be by Solinus himself. This version contains a letter that Solinus wrote as an introduction to the work which gives the work the title *Polyhistor* ('multi-descriptive'). Both versions of the work were circulated widely, and eventually *Polyhistor* was taken for the author's name.

Solinus *Polyhistor*, had improved greatly Strabo's account of the Island, though by some involuntary perversity, each writer in succession frequently contradicts or invalidates the statement of his predecessor where he had arrived at the exact truth, and substitutes instead some fable of his own. He had apparently said that the Island was 20 days sail in crude bamboo crafts from the Gulf of Persia, but did not exceed 7 days in well built ships. He had also made references to the Gulf of Mannar, which he said was a shallow sea not more than 5 fathoms deep in most places.

Sopater (ca. 515 AD)

Sopater, according to Emmerson Tennent (1859), was a Greek merchant, who in the course of business sailed from Adule in Ethiopia in the same ship with a Persian bound for Ceylon, and on his arrival, he and his fellow traveler had been presented to the King (believed to be Kumara Das), by the officers of the port. Apparently the King had received them with courtesy, and as narrated by *Cosmos*, in the course of the interview with the King, Sopater had succeeded in convincing the Sinhalese monarch of the great power of Rome as compared to that of Persia by exhibiting the large and highly finished gold coin of the Roman Emperor, in contrast with the smaller inelegant silver money of the Shah of Persia. Sopater is acknowledged to be the first

traveller to describe Ceylon from personal knowledge. He had reported that Ceylon was a great island in the Indian Ocean called Serendib by Indians and Taprobane by the Greeks. He had also reported that according to its inhabitants, the country is 300 gaudia or 900 miles long and as many in breadth. He claimed that the Island had two kings ruling at opposite ends, and that there was a community of Christians and a presbyter, chiefly of Persian origin.

Nothing more is known of Sopater, except to note from Cosmos's narration written between 545 – 550 AD, that Sopater had made the trip to Ceylon 30 years before that period.

Still, John (1880 – 1941)

Born in 1880, John Still was educated at Winchester College and came to Ceylon to plant tea, and later



moved to archeology and land settlement. During the 20 years or so that he spent in the Island, John Still travelled widely and amassed a wealth of knowledge about the country and the people. While training as a planter in a tea estate in Dickoya, he learnt Tamil and Sinhala, and had his first experience

of a tropical forest in the estate's timber reserves, where he befriended wild animals, studied relics of the Stone Age man, and went out to explore the secrets of the vast Peak Wilderness. As Assistant to H. C. P. Bell, John Still supervised the excavations at the ruined city of Anuradhapura. He brought to light many a ruin around Mihintale, and for a time at Sigiriya explored the ruins of King Kasyapa's Capital. At Polonnaruwa, John Still discovered the ruins of the Lotus Bath about which he had apparently known (though not discovered yet at that time) through a description in the Mahawamsa.

Enlisted for service in the First World War, John had been taken prisoner in Turkey, and while in captivity sought some absorbing work to make life endurable. He then discovered that he could compose poems, and embarked on an "awful career of writing verses". His book "Poems in Captivity" was published by John Lane in London in 1919. The bulk of the 300 page volume was on Sri Lanka, her jungles, her people, and history.

Despite his deteriorating health in prison John Still established contacts with England through coded messages. The seemingly harmless letters he sent eventually reached the War Office that enabled steps to be taken to alleviate the sufferings of POWs' in Turkey.

The fastidious writer that he was John Still wrote much but published little and destroyed much of what he wrote. He took 16 months to compile the

"Index to the Mahavamsa", while his "A Prisoner in Turkey" was written in eight days and four hours. John Still took 10 years to write his "History of Ancient Ceylon", an enormous work of 100,000 words which he never published. In 1922 writing to a close associate back in Kandy he confided, Yes I burned the history. Lane the publisher, wanted to print it, and I had a long yarn with Edward Garnett who thought it could be published. But I said 'You only judge it as literature, it is bad history'. So I burned it".

John Still considered his celebrated work, "Jungle Tide" as "the only good book I ever wrote" and was happy at the way it was received by discerning critics. He was also pleased with his efforts to have it prescribed as an examination book in Ceylon, "I should like to feel that many of the brightest boys and girls of Lanka might learn my way of looking at, into, through and behind things, mentally rather like the leopard in Jungle Tide" he contended.

In 1939 John Still went to Rhodesia where his son was living to spend his last days. Stricken with diabetes and arthritis in the final seven years of his life, he was nursed by Monica, a Lankan born daughter of a Gampola tea planter, whom Still was long acquainted with. Monica described Still in his last stages thus: "He was a devout Buddhist and an ascetic. He had self control which amazed me so much. Suffering so much with dreadful diseases that he had the ability to bear up with a sense of humour was something that struck me, even after so many years of nursing that I had behind me".

Tragedy overtook John Still with the commencement of World War Two. His son John Still Jr., with whom Monica and her charge were living, died in action, leaving them to their destinies. After this John Still went downhill steadily and died on September 9, 1941.

(Courtesy K. G. H. Munidasa, Sunday Observer, 10th October 2010).

CORRECTION

Some errors had crept into the synopsis written by Hugh Karunanayake of the Justin Daraniyagala talk made by Dr Srilal Fernando at the Melbourne Chapter meeting. This made the cover story in *The Ceylankan* of February 2019 (J85). On page 17 para 2 should have read "He [Daraniyagala] moved to the solitude of his parent's estate in **Nugedola** (not Nugegoda). Also on same page in para 9 line 3 "Anais Nin who was well known in Paris and was the muse for the American playwright **Henry Miller** (not Arthur Miller).

The editor offers his apologies to Dr Srilal Fernando, Hugh Karunanayake and all our readers for any embarrassment and inconvenience these errors may have caused them.

Jandamarra and Saradiel living worlds apart, were juxtaposed as rebels with a cause... In Part I (J85) the author portrayed Western Australian Jandamarra's role in the classic tale. In this instalment he offers the counterpoint of Saradiel from far away Sri Lanka (Ceylon then) showing a fusion of minds unbeknown to each other. Saradiel and Jandamara never met. The author generously agreed to present this part of the story in the CSA's quarterly public meeting when the designated speaker had to withdraw due to illness. Read on...

Jandamarra and Saradiel: 19th Century rebels with a cause – in Australia and Ceylon Part II

by THIRU ARUMUGAM

The second rebel Deekirikevage Saradiel was born in the Kegalle District in 1832. He and his gang were bandits, and like Robin Hood he distributed the proceeds among the poor. He was arrested and hanged in 1864. He was 32 years old. Many consider his actions as being against British rule and their supporters, rather than as mere banditry. Jandamarra and Saradiel had another thing in common – their followers believed them to have supernatural powers which made them virtually invincible.

Deekirikevage Saradiel (Fig. 5), better known as Utuwankande Sura Saradiel (Saradiel, the hero of mountain Utuwan), was born on 25 March 1832 in Kegalle District, Ceylon. His life and times are described in the form of a 212 page novel titled



• Figure 5 Deekirikevage Saradiel (1832 - 1864)

“Saradiel: Robin Hood of Ceylon” by Gunasena Vithana, translated into English by Tilak Balasuriya (Vijitha Yapa, Colombo, 2013). The book has been a valuable source of information for this part of the article. Tony Saldin has also written an interesting article titled “As Saradiel holds Ceylon’s serenity under siege” which appeared in the November 2011 edition of this Journal.

Deekirikevage Adasi Appu from Chilaw District was an itinerant door to door pedlar in western Ceylon. He started by selling trinkets like bangles and then moved on to selling tobacco. During his



• Figure 6 Utuwankande - Saradiel's mountain cave hideout. (Courtesy: Shalaka Gamage)

travels he came across a poor beautiful woman in the village of Molligoda, near the Utuwankanda mountain (Fig. 6) which is close to Mawanella. Her name was Pichohamy. She had inherited her beauty from her mother who was in the harem of the last King of Kandy, Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, who had been deposed by the British about fifteen years previously.

The couple got married and had about five children of whom Saradiel was the first born in 1832. Saradiel was admitted to the nearby Idangoda Temple School. One day in 1848 in the school, Saradiel was involved in a clash with the sons of the rich Arachchi, Village Headman and Korale in which the Arachchi's

son was accidentally injured. Later when Saradiel heard that the Arachchi was searching for him to wreck vengeance, Saradiel decided to run away from the village and head for Colombo. He was 16 years old.

In Colombo, Saradiel managed to get a job in the Army Barracks. One evening there was a party in the Army Headquarters as it was the Governor's birthday. Alcohol flowed freely and in the noise and commotion Sardiel was able to force open undetected the Army Chief's office window and get the Armoury keys. He opened the Armoury door and collected some guns, pistols and ammunition and put it in a large gunny bag. To avoid going out through the main gate where he would be searched, he scaled the Barracks outer wall using a ladder and ran away with the armaments.

Saradiel returned to Utuwankande but he had to go underground. He was a master of disguise. He formed a gang and Mammale Marikkar was his right-hand man. During this time there was a major increase in coffee plantation in Ceylon and it became the third largest coffee producing country in the world. There were many coffee plantations in the area surrounding Utuwankanda with palatial bungalows for the coffee planters. Sardiel and his gang took to armed raids of these bungalows and took away guns, ammunition, cash, jewellery and of course, any whisky that they could find. The cash and jewellery were freely distributed among the poor of the district.

Saradiel had found an ola leaf manuscript near the top of Utuwankanda. He asked a priest to explain its contents and the priest said that it contains mantrams, which if recited, give you immunity from death. Saradiel also obtained from a temple a magic oil which when applied on the body, was claimed to ward off any bullet.

First arrest of Saradiel

One day Saradiel heard that his father was seriously ill in a hospital in the Chilaw district and he decided to go and see him. An informant told the Police that the wanted Saradiel was in a house in Minuwangoda and took three policemen to the house. When confronted, Saradiel stabbed the informant, and also Constables Pasqual and Miguel and a Police Sergeant. However, one of them hit Saradiel on the head with a pestle and he passed out. He was arrested and brought to Negombo Police Station, charged with the attempted murder of four persons and held in Aluthkade Remand Jail.

While he was in remand, he maintained a diary. In it he wrote about the unfairness of foreigners taking over the jungles and planting coffee, of Mudalalis, Arachchilas and Korales swallowing up the lands of the poor villagers and he vowed

vengeance against all of them. It so happened that one of Saradiel's jailers, Magiris Appu, was from Utuwankande. He was bribed by Saradiel's brother

TWO HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

NOTICE.

WHEREAS it has been represented to Government, that *Sardiel, Hawadiya, Raja, Mohamadar Marcan, and Samat*, who have either escaped from Justice or are evading warrants issued for their apprehension on various charges, and who are all in the district of Tumpalata between Utuwankanda and Arenake, form, with others, a gang of Robbers headed by the said *Sardiel*.

A REWARD OF ONE HUNDRED POUNDS is hereby offered to any person or persons, who shall give such information as shall lead to the apprehension of the said **SARDIEL**, or who shall deliver him to any Justice of the Peace in this Island.

A REWARD OF TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS is also offered to any person or persons who shall give such information as shall lead to the apprehension of *each of the other persons abovenamed*, or shall deliver them or any of them to any Justice of the Peace in this Island.

By His Honor's Command,
W. C. GIBSON,
Col. Secy.

Colonial Secretary's Office,
Colombo, 13th January, 1864.

• *Figure 7 Colonial Secretary's Reward Notice (Ceylon Gazette 13 January 1864)*

and a duplicate key to Saradiel's cell was obtained. One night a liberal supply of ganja was passed on to the duty jailers. Saradiel then opened his cell door with the duplicate key, climbed on to the roof of the lavatory and over the wall of the jail and made good his escape. He returned to Utuwankande and took up abode with his gang in a secret cave near the top of Utuwankande.

Final showdown

In spite of several requests made by Governor O'Brien, the Colonial Secretary refused permission for Ceylonese policeman to carry firearms. There were two reasons for this refusal. Firstly, the Government wished to give the impression that Ceylon was subjugated as a Colony by friendly persuasion rather than by police firearms. The second reason was the very real fear that in the event of an insurrection these arms could be used against the Government. The net result was that in encounters between Saradiel and his gang who were armed to the teeth, the police could only use swords, daggers and batons. Saradiel and his gang were therefore able to hold up the horse drawn mail coaches travelling between Colombo and Kandy with impunity. The hold ups became so frequent that the service was temporarily suspended.

In January 1864, the Government offered a reward for information leading to the apprehension of Saradiel and his gang, or for any of them being delivered to any Justice of the Peace, as they are evading warrants issued against them. The reward for Saradiel was one hundred Pounds and the rewards for Hawadiya, Baya, Mammale Marikkar and Samath were twenty five Pounds each (Figure 7).

In February 1864, two members of Saradiel's gang, Sirimal and Ukkinda were arrested by the Police and Saradiel was expecting a showdown. A few days later Saradiel was surrounded by a group of Police when he was in his mother's house. In the melee that followed, Saradiel shot dead Constable George van Hart and his father Christian Appu. The other policemen ran away. As van Hart was under temporary suspension from his post, he was not recognised as the first Ceylonese policeman to die in the line of duty.

A few days later, the office of the Assistant Government Agent, Kegalle, was broken into and his revolver and other arms taken by Saradiel and his men. This was the last straw. The Governor informed the Colonial Secretary, W C Gibson, that Saradiel was organising a rebellion against the Government and if permission was not given to issue firearms to Ceylonese Police, then he was going to resign. The Colonial Secretary relented and finally gave permission to arm the Police.

Having received the all clear from the Colonial Secretary a fully armed group of Police and Army, including the Pioneer Corps and the Malay Regiment approached Utuwankande on 21st March 1864. Having received information that Saradiel was in Mammale Marikkar's sister's house, the house was surrounded. The Police opened fire and Saradiel was wounded and fell down. Mammale rushed down and returned fire killing Constable Sabhan. The other policemen retreated but kept the house surrounded until Kegalle Assistant Government Agent Saunders arrived on the scene. Realising that further confrontation would be pointless, Saradiel and Mamale surrendered. Constable Sabhan is commemorated as the first serving Ceylonese Policeman to have died performing his duty.

The Supreme Court Trial

Saradiel and Mammale were taken to Bogambara Jail and their Kandy Supreme Court trial was held on 04 April 1864 with Cambridge educated Judge Henry Byerley Thomson on the bench. Judge Thomson was scholar and later wrote the two volume "Institutes of the Laws of Ceylon", a digest of the law as administered in Ceylon. Although the Judge had the option of selecting some Ceylonese as part of the jury, he opted to select an all British jury. The Judge looked round the seated Advocates and assigned Advocate Dunuwila to defend the two accused.

Dunuwila declined the assignment stating that if he appeared for the accused his loyalty to the Crown may become suspect. Judge Thomson said that if no counsel appeared for the accused, the case would go down in history as one in which justice was denied. Immediately an Advocate named Denis Parcell stood up and said that he was Irish and he was not prepared to safeguard an unjust British Government and that he was prepared to appear for the accused, supported by his colleague James Van Langenburg (a Burgher, later to become a Member of the Legislative Council). At that time Ireland was under British rule and Parcell did not want to miss the opportunity of cocking a snook at the British.

The prosecution was led by Richard Francis Morgan, a Burgher and 13th Queens Advocate of Ceylon. The Queens Advocate is the equivalent of the Attorney General. He later became Acting Chief Justice, Member of the Executive Council and was knighted in 1874. The prosecution said that although the accused were directly involved in several murders they were only charging them with two indictments because they were confident of getting a positive verdict on these two charges. They were firstly, the killing of Constables George van Hart and Christian Appu on 17 March 1864 in Utuwankanda, and secondly the killing of Constable Samath on 21 March 1864 in Mawanella.

Defence Advocate Parcell wanted to know from the Court why the accused were in chains and handcuffs, when they are only accused and have not been found guilty. The Crown Counsel wanted to know whether the defence Advocate was unaware that

SARDIEL, the famous Kaigalle bandit, has stood his trial, and a Kandy jury have found him guilty of murder. It is to be hoped that the vindication of the law in execution of the villain will effectually break up and disperse the gang of whom he was the bold and daring chief.

• Figure 8 Extract from the "Colombo Observer" 16 April 1864

the accused had broken jail and has held the country to ransom for the past two years. The Judge, however, ordered that chains binding the legs and hands of the accused be removed.

The Judge then asked the two accused how they wished to plead and both of them said that they were not guilty. Nineteen witnesses then gave evidence for the prosecution. Advocate Parcell defending the accused said that these deaths occurred when the police surrounded the houses without the authority of the law or the courts. This, he said, was accepted by the witnesses who were cross examined. The deaths had occurred during illegal raids. He said he could cite several decisions by British Courts which were relevant. Since these deaths occurred during illegal raids without sanctions of the law, the accused

are therefore not guilty. The Judge in his summing up to the Jury told them not to be prejudiced by the fact that the accused are enemies of the British but to arrive at their verdict based on the evidence presented. The Jury took only fifteen minutes to arrive at a unanimous verdict of guilty and the Judge sentenced them to be hanged by the neck in one month's time, that is on 04 May 1864 (See Figure 8).

During the last month of his life, Saradiel was converted to the Catholic faith and baptised by Father Duffo. On the nominated execution date, large crowds gathered in Kandy and fearing a breach of the peace, the execution was postponed. It was secretly carried out three days later. On the scaffold he expressed regret for the life he had led and hoped that his death would be an example to others. Father Duffo accompanied him to the scaffold and said that Saradiel started reciting the Lord's Prayer when the trapdoor fell. Father Duffo wrote later, "But his soul was in heaven ending the prayer that he had started on earth".

Rienzi Crusz has been described by the well established and reputed American Journal "World Literature Today" as "Arguably the best living Sri Lankan poet in English ... prepared to appropriate the colonial legacy of Shakespeare and English without anguished breast beating". Rienzi Crusz has written a book titled "Lord of the Mountain: The Saradiel Poems" (TSAR Publications, Toronto, 1999). The book is a mixture of lucid prose and exquisite verse about Saradiel. On page 4 he poses the question:

We ask, as you once did,
the same questions:
Who ravaged whom?



• Mammale Marikkar, Saradiel's right hand man.

Who's the victim, who's the bandit?
Who the conqueror, who the damned?

NOTE: Saradiel Village
Dr Ariyasena Gamage
was born in 1953 and was
a student at Richmond
College, Galle.

He entered the
Medical Faculty of the
University in Colombo
and qualified as a Doctor.
His first posting in 1979
was as Medical Officer
of Health in Mawanella,
which is the nearest town to
Utuwankanda. He later



Dr Ariyasena Gamage

worked in the neighbouring Kegalle District Hospital for many years. Having lived and worked in Saradiel country for several years, he heard many stories of the exploits of Saradiel, handed down by word of mouth by villagers through the generations.

When he retired in 2008 he was determined to create something that would perpetuate the memory of Saradiel. He decided to build a 'Saradiel Village' which would depict what the village of Utuwankanda would have been like during the lifetime of Saradiel. Using his life savings, he purchased six acres of land in the foothills of Utuwankanda mountain. He hired the services of sculptors headed by Kalbushana Milton Jayapala and together they created Saradiel Village. The Village was completed in 2012 and is open to visitors. It is now visited daily by hundreds of visitors including mainly groups of school children and tourists.

A visit to the Village takes one through the life and important events of Saradiel's life. Among the features of the Village are replicas of the entrance to the Alutnuwara Temple, an Ambalama (traveller's resting place), a Kopi Kaday (tea was yet to come to Ceylon), a Tavern, a House made of clay, Paddy storage bins, an Astrologer's house, Carpenter's workshop, Arachchi's house, Goldsmith's workshop, Potter's wheel, Stocks (a punishment device), a Ferry, Village kitchen, Dhoby's house, Communal bathing pond, Palanquin (a mode of transport for VIPs), Horse cart depicting Saradiel and Marikkar being taken to Kandy after his arrest, Saradiel and Marikkar in Bogambara jail and a replica of the gallows in which the two of them were executed.

(Pictures of a selection of the exhibits can be seen on the front and back covers of this issue.)





BOOK REVIEW

Two to Tango

by Somasiri Devendra

(Lt Commander RCyN - Retd)

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Reviewed by: Doug Jones



The title of Somasiri Devendra's book aroused my curiosity straight away. "It Takes Two To Tango" is the name of a song vocalised in the 1950s by Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney, Louis Armstrong and further popularised by Pearl Bailey in the 1960s. Through time, the phrase evolved as a frequently used proverb.

Luckily, I didn't have to probe too deep. The author clarified matters in the first few pages when he says: "... I started out to set down as accurately as possible, how the events and environment had been seen by the 13-year old 'me'. But that proved too difficult: there were too many layers to peel away. So it became the view of that child as recalled by a later edition of him. They are the two who tango."

And they tango with rhythmic elegance and grace throughout the story. Somasiri Devendra claims the book was not intended for children because he wrote it for his own enjoyment and pleasure. The life in a *walawa* in rural Thiruvananthapuram, a fabulously verdant village in Ratnapuram, far-away from dusty, mundane little house in Nawalapitiya where the young family lived previously, brought immense delight to young Somasiri. It was huge with no defined garden as such and the vast outer fringes waiting for a child to explore. Here in the wide-open spaces with lots of fresh air to breathe in deeply, a varied mixture of nature to behold, get to learn about and even experiment with. Small in stature, he took delight in getting down to the ground, especially after a shower of rain and dabbling in the wet soil with ants, worms and beetles crawling everywhere. The teenager and his younger sister Ransiri - "we were the closest and whatever we did, we did it together" he says - they climbed trees, leapt fences as they let their childlike curiosity run wild. It was during this time too that Somasiri discovered that he was getting near-sighted and had to wear spectacles within a year.

Somasiri loved nature and carried out numerous experiments like his attempts at

propagating new trees by planting single leaves hoping they would grow into trees. He did not succeed, naturally. But Botany became one of his favourite subjects to this day.

Somasiri had a creative streak in him with a penchant for making different gadgets to aid his various creations. He liked building his own toys: hellbent on creating things he knew nothing about, like deciding to try his hand at grafting. Armed with only an old penknife with two blades, a roll of cotton tape, he didn't get very far.

He had to explore the unknown and along with Ransiri, he went on what he called a "Cook's Tour" experiencing the full extent of their property - where they came across the Jak tree (too big for them to climb). Here in abundance was the abhorrent leech perched on the edge of grasses, reaching out to passers-by and latching on to the softest part of their foot. They loop into that part of the flesh and "suck their fill, falling off with a bloated bellyful of blood, leaving the still bleeding wound" and a screaming victim behind. Before long the adventurous pair had mastered the timely art of flicking these creepy crawlies away or to apply the appropriate antidote in case they did fall victim.

Their favourite spot, "a delightful place" as Somasiri called it, was the *peel-la*, the place built for communal bathing. Water from the hills have been dammed to form a pool and water flowed down through a metal outlet six-feet above. Bathers stood under cold water; men wearing traditional *amuday*, women in a *diya-redda* and children clad in some clothing or nothing.

Somasiri's parents, who were always respectfully referred to as Father and Mother, were caring but maintained strict discipline. Children had chores to do like, for instance, clearing the *midula* or garden, of the copious weeds and grasses some of which were so bushy they came off with roots and soil. Elder brother Tissa created a diversion from the unpleasant duty by tossing them up in the air letting them fall like parachutes, much to the gleeful encouragement from Somasiri and Ransiri, only to be admonished by Mother and Father as they decreed, "work was not meant to be fun!"

Their respect for parents, grandfather (*seeya*) and uncles and aunts was admirable. They loved *seeya* even though he created amusement and laughter with his feeble antics. Maybe *seeya's* service in the Royal Navy greatly influenced Somasiri in making a career with the RCyN himself. Their love of reading was influenced by Father's love of books and in the early years, Somasiri read the classical and romantic story books mostly from his Uncle Edward's library which he had free access to. He also had a special place for his Aunt Lakshmi who told them stories like when weeding the garden, they found fat white grubs which the kids found revolting. Aunt Lakshmi took the

chance and wove the story that in China they would put the grub inside a coconut where it would eat the kernel and grow big enough to fill the entire cavity. Then the coconut would be cracked open and they would eat the fat coconut-sized grub inside with great relish.

Reading the book brought back my own childhood memories of some 70-odd years ago, living in a very rural Ragama. I recalled how my two older sisters rode a *bara karatthe* to school and I almost always wanted to join them, hopping on to the step at the last minute and often falling off with bruises and scratches to show for it.

Our home was surrounded by paddy fields, small lakes teeming with little fish and frogs and the surrounds abundant with all kinds of snakes.

While the book is still an adult's recollection of his childhood, the author unmistakably sees his world from the perspective of the child.

In keeping with the author's intentions, I recommend this book to every adult. It is an enthralling work of love that many of us will find hard to put down. It lures the reader to look back with longing at those wonderful days of their own childhood. Have a good read as you do the tango.



Neruda's 'Dusky Statue' in Wellawatte and in an airport in Chile

by Tissa Devendra



"Pablo Neruda was a Nobel Laureate whose poetry chronicled the lives and struggles of ordinary Latin Americans, and whose life was upheld as a symbol

of resistance to dictatorship. But a decision to rename Chile's busiest international airport after him has been met with outrage from human rights activists who argue that the honour is inappropriate for a man who admitted to rape in his Memoirs The encounter was like that of a man and a statue; [News item -The Guardian UK]

This news item took my mind back to my short story "Brumpy's Daughter" where I spun a yarn around Neruda's sojourn ninety years ago in Colonial Ceylon. The 'dusky statue' who shared his 'lightning spasm of the flesh' was a young Tamil 'coolly' who cleaned toilets. My story gave her a name, Thangamma, a baby, Imelda, from Neruda, and a husband, Brumpy.

In my story Imelda grows up to be a lovely, accomplished young lady who becomes an officer in government service where she worked in my office. She is much admired by my Assistants but shows no interest in her admirers. She moved elsewhere and I had no news of her.

"Some years later I was at an FAO conference in Mexico. At the inevitable evening reception " A distinguished Chilean delegate walked up to me and introduced himself as Ronaldo Frei who had been an FAO Expert in Sri Lanka.....He was accompanied by his wife, She was a handsome woman with an intriguing smile, who seemed strangely familiar. As she stretched out her hand to shake mine she said "Sir, can't you recognize me ? I am Imelda Ratnayaka who worked in Aluth Eliya Kachcheri." It was a seismic shock for me..... Ronaldo told me their story.....He had always been enthralled with the poetry of Pablo Neruda and decided to come to Colombo to absorb the atmosphere his hero once strode in.....He roamed the byways of Wellawatta armed with Neruda's Memoirs..... His persistence paid off and he located Brumpy and Thangamma in Puhulweva. This led him back to Imelda whose olive Latin looks had first charmed him when he met her at an FAO meeting in Colombo. At last she had met her Prince Charming. And Ronaldo had won a living link with Pablo Neruda..."

Postscript: I never realized the pitfalls in mixing fact and fiction in a story till I received a phone call from London. The caller was a young English writer embarking on a biography of Pablo Neruda. He had read my story "Brumpy's Daughter" and pleaded with me to advise him how he could contact Neruda's daughter Imelda. My 'confession' must have broken his heart.



HE Somasundaram Skandakumar – a memorable captain's knock

BY CHITRAN DURAISAMY

His Excellency Somasundaram Skandakumar took up this appointment in 2015 with responsibilities as plenipotentiary to Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. He returns to the homeland where his heart belongs but not without capturing our hearts in the process. He is quick to admit "I'm not a career diplomat" but judging by his exemplary manner, he has carried out his duties with deft perfection that would be the envy of any professional diplomat.

It is evident to many of us that it is his passion for the country that has set him apart as one of the most distinguished ambassadors to grace these shores. A man of integrity, he has used his gifted ability to reach out to people and cut across ethnic and political differences.

The heightened racial tension (2009-2010), its subsequent spill-over impact and the change in government (2015) appeared to raise its ugly head within the diaspora. How fortunate were we, against this backdrop to welcome a diplomat whose aim was to solidify us; not as Sinhalese, Tamils, Burghers, Malays or Muslims but as Sri Lankans. He did this through both word and deed by actively promoting the shared vision of a better world. 'We are all children of one common mother' - a line from our national anthem, he uses often to remind us of our heritage, culture and the need for unity.

As a strong advocate for bilateral relations he has been instrumental in many trade and social engagements between our two nations. A game dear to his heart, in cricket parlance, his short yet effective 'captain's knock' the past 4 years has produced several boundaries hard to emulate. Given his stellar corporate career in Sri Lanka, his appeal and charisma in inter-governmental dealings paved the way for Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to visit Sri Lanka.

Reciprocal visits by the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka followed. Incidentally, the previous state visit by a Sri Lankan prime minister took place when Sir John Kotelawala visited Australia in the 1950s.

Additionally, under his purview stronger ties in border security control and steps towards knowledge share in both environment preservation and food crops established.

Several memoranda of understanding economic issues have also been signed. In particular, the Trade and Investment Framework agreement signed in Colombo in November 2017 has opened the doors for discussions on economic reform and



cooperation, free trade, regional trade agreements, market access and specific opportunities for investment between both countries.

Our modest High Commissioner is quick to deflect these achievements as "strengthening bilateral collaboration" and in doing so he would acknowledge the efforts and contributions of his fellow staff members and other stake-holders. This comes as no surprise as many who worked for him in Sri Lanka will still vouch for his benevolence and leadership qualities.

His drive in reinforcing multicultural ties between our two nations is evident by the setting up of the Sri Lankan Festival in Canberra in 2016. Large crowds from diverse communities attend this annual event to savour Sri Lankan tea and culinary delights. Intricate and colourful Sri Lankan handlooms, burnt wood art, porcelain, tourist board promotions and displays are also on offer. Proceeds of this event are donated to the 'Little Hearts' Project of the Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital in Sri Lanka.

Having completed three successive years, we hope this legacy he leaves behind will be continued by his successor. Big shoes to fill, no doubt!

A gifted speaker he often engages his audience with his extemporaneous speeches - profound, humorous, inspiring and patriotic. There is often a reference or comparison to life imitating cricket akin to Oscar Wilde's observation of "Life imitating Art".

Listening to him speak is a pure delight and his delivery of jokes is subtle and classy (if opportunity presents, ask him about the lance corporal with three sons)! He never fails to enthuse his audience and always leaves a thoughtful message for one to ponder. The epitome of Integrity and Sportsmanship he 'walks the talk' yet very gracious at all times.

He was commissioned in the 1990s to prepare a report on the failures within Sri Lankan cricket. Dubbed the Skandakumar report his findings and recommendations in due course largely assisted a new look, positive team to emerge and win the 1996 World Cup. He does not hesitate to commend Australia on its influence and support towards Sri Lanka gaining test status. Recently, while watching the Sri Lankans play at Manuka Oval, he fondly reflected on Greg Chappell's team visit to Sri Lanka in the early 1980s for the first official Test game.

He is well-respected and held in high esteem by cricket legends. His erudite knowledge and understanding of the game has been well summed up by prominent cricket journalist Michael Roberts who described him as "A perceptive observer of the cricket scene".

The realisation that he is going back home may be a surprise to some but to others who have known this humble gentleman, his heart is in Sri Lanka; Haputale in particular, where he will continue to champion various charity projects dear to his heart.

Incidentally, this would have to rate as one of the longest farewells extended to a High Commissioner. No sooner his return to Sri Lanka was made official in June last year, than many individuals and organisations lined up to bid him farewell.

This is indeed a testimony and reflection of the calibre of our High Commissioner, who will be sadly missed. Putting aside his public persona, 'Skanda' is a family oriented brother as described by his beloved sister Saro; family means the world to him and she has referred to him as that proverbial candle who burns himself to provide light to others. We will remember the brightness he brought into our lives here Down Under.

It is rare to find an individual who has traversed academia, sports, a successful corporate career, public and diplomatic service and navigated each with effortless ease leaving behind notable imprints in all sectors.

This Sir, you have done in your inimitable style with distinction and we thank you, salute and wish you well.

Note: His Excellency Somasundaram Skandakumar addressing guests on the completion of his tenure as High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Australia on Sunday 28th April. In view of the recent tragedy in Sri Lanka, the original concept of a farewell function to HE was converted to a function of Rememberance to enable Sri Lankans and friends in Australia to pay homage to their countrymen and loved ones. (Photograph by Imtiaz Issadeen, Webmaster, Ozlanka).

The essential Ceylonese host

Mr Weerasinghe [a well-to-do patient at the Colombo General Hospital with not long to live, decided to treat his co-patients to a decent meal] was the essential Ceylonese host, not happy until everyone had eaten a little more than their current appetite allowed. "Have a few more; what about some more fish?"

"I am quite happy now."

"Oh come on, you're a young fellow. At your age..."

The schoolmaster was seated at the edge of the bed and eating with breathtaking gusto, customary rustic relish and concentration. This was precisely the kind of meal he would have relished. He ate with his fingers as the great majority did. Western-educated elite, who probably had lived in England for sometime, and their families, adopted an occidental lifestyle. They ate Western-styled food and used Western cutlery and crockery.

The village headman was glad to note there were no eggs. Nor were the patients who were still unable to leave their beds in other rooms neglected. Plates were passed round with exaggerated quiet and the feast was enjoyed by all in varying degrees.

When a basic Ceylonese, that is to say one untouched by foreign ways, ate a meal, there was little time for conversation. While a mouthful was being masticated, the other mouthful was being manufactured on the plate. And as the first went

down the gullet, the second was hastened to the wide-open mouth.

A really hungry Sri Lankan with a healthy appetite attacking a standard Sri Lankan main meal of rice and curry is a truly awesome sight. The highly seasoned food, in a few moments makes the diner perspire freely, and this, plus his avidity and concentration make his eyes tear and bulge and his nostrils dilate. A stranger might wonder at which moment he would bite his fingers off, and likewise admire the adroitness with which he shovels the food in and then takes the fingers away a second before the jaws clamp down. The women, vive la difference, ate daintily and with quiet enjoyment.

The schoolmaster rose, his face flushed with the exertion and heat generated by the chillie in the curries, went up to the sink and washed his hands and his plate. He then found the time to smile expansively and belch aloud.

"Maru" in a single word of approbation uttered with conviction.

There were similar notes of satisfaction all around.

(Excerpt from The Palm of His Hand by E.C.T. Candappa; the first fiction writing to depict the assassination of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.)

APPRECIATIONS

Dr Bandula Herat

11 - 10- 1941 — 07 - 02 - 2019

It is sometimes hard to reflect on the relationship you have with your father over your whole life. The early years are remembered in photos of family holidays, cassette recordings of our musical and dad's not so musical talents and snippets of memories of backyard cricket and board games. The teen years are even more problematic where a father/son relationship is complicated by their changing roles. There was nothing I didn't know at 16, that dad didn't teach you. Then you hit your 20s and finally some things start to make sense that you can reflect and grow on.



It was at this stage in my life that I developed some interest in my culture and jumped on a chance to go to Sri Lanka with mum and dad. It was there that I really got my first mature glimpse of my dad in what I call his natural state. We were back in his home town of Kurunagala. I walked into the room and he seemed to have the whole room captivated and in stitches of laughter over some joke he was telling in Sinhalese. I remember thinking, "the bloke aint that funny", but then it dawned on me that his style of humour must only translate in his mother tongue.

I learnt a lot on that trip about his life growing up and took in the stories of his youth – turns out we had a lot in common. A competitiveness, a defiant edge, a love of mates. Things started to click and our relationship changed.

There are things in his life that will always remain as strong memories. The cricket – apart from mum, his greatest love. Pretty hard in a Sri Lankan family not to love cricket, but the community games that took place out of our driveway will always be a memory. It seemed the whole street would be rolling the arm over including the milkman on his run. Dad would come home from work and bowl a couple – I would dispatch him with no mercy – as I said earlier, changing roles. He played competitively until he was 68 which is rare in this day and age – I'd say one of the first signs of his Alzheimer's was his retirement from cricket. He rarely dropped catches growing up but when they start slipping through the fingers in the outfield, serious injury is a possibility. He took it in typical fashion with a joke at his 70th, "what happens to a cricketer when his eyesight starts to fail? He becomes an umpire...."

Another is of him at St Matthews Uniting Church where he was a valued parishioner. He had

a few roles as an Elder and Vestry Steward which through a young kid's eyes, seemed to involve telling incoherent jokes to unsuspecting churchgoers as they walked in to take their seats. He also appeared to enjoy with gusto singing the hymns out of tune – much to the outrage of the church's long standing choir conductor, my mother. I know that Church meant more to him than just his weekly stand-up routine, but it felt like that at the time. I like to think a bit of this rubbed off on me – never take yourself too seriously and bring your true self to everything you do.

As I've grown older with my own family in mind, I'm reminded of the extended family that Dad sponsored to Australia and other family that followed. With Dad's five other siblings, we had a large family base, but we didn't all grow up together and our lives only meshed later in life. Along with Jenny and Tracy on my Mum's side, who we did grow up with, the huge family network we have now is something I have always craved. To watch my kids in amongst the crowd of cousins of all ages, brings me a huge amount of joy and respect for what my parents did to lead the charge to this country.

My sisters and I were given every opportunity in life to succeed and it's clear this was a primary focus for our parents. We seem to have taken on a message of hard work and resilience that comes with migrating families and I hope we can continue that trend and never take for granted the hardships of the past. My kids will be stronger for being part of a binding network of family and I have Dad to thank for that legacy. The visceral reaction he had to seeing my son Hugo for the first time from his usual lucid state, is something I will never forget and a constant reminder of the importance of the role I play.

Lastly to mum Eulie; it's been a hard road in dealing with Alzheimers and the uncertainty it brings, but you have been un-wavering and strong over the past 10 years at his bedside. The way you live your life in church, in travel, in work and in health is something that I know Dad and your children are proud of. I always look for a silver lining and we were lucky that we got to say our goodbyes before he slipped calmly away.

Rest in peace Dad – your's was a great innings!

— Shaun Herat

A daughter's tribute

Our Dad, Bandula Herat was born in 1941 in Maraluwawa, Sri Lanka, about 100 kms from the capital Colombo. The youngest of 6 children, with 4 sisters before him and an older brother. His father was the Village Chief.

Being the youngest, he was the 'favourite' - he got more sweets than his siblings and his sisters

covered for him when he was out with his friends. Growing up, he followed his dad around as he did his political rounds and wasn't afraid of the limelight.

On finishing schooling at St Anne's Catholic College in Kurunegala, Bandula went on to Medical College in Kandy. After mainly playing tennis and cricket up to this point, he decided to take up body building.

He would live on campus and return home for long weekends and holidays. What he didn't know at the time, was that his future father-in-law was one of his lecturers.

In 1968 as an intern at Kurunegala Hospital, Dad met Eulalie Baptist, also an intern. They seemed like pair to fellow interns. Over a short time, suspicions about them were confirmed when Bandula bought Eulalie a bottle of the finest wine at the time – Old Barrel.

Mum's dad was keen for her to leave Sri Lanka as there were a few avenues open for skilled migrants overseas. They became engaged in Sri Lanka and then applied for jobs in Australia and New Zealand. Both were successful in gaining jobs in the same city, the same suburb of Auburn in fact. Dad was senior resident at Auburn Hospital and mum resident at St Joseph's Hospital.

Being a fairly private man, one of his junior residents, remembers frequent phone calls to St Joseph's to "check up" on them and wondered what was going on there that they needed so much input from a senior resident. Only later did he realise the phone calls were not of a medical nature!

Eulie and Bandu were married on April 24, 1971 and honeymooned in Canberra. They gave up hospital accommodation and moved to a flat in Harris Park before moving to Pendle Hill.

Rose was born two years later, and Dad worked with GP practices at Fairfield and Granville before starting up their own practice on Hawkesbury Road, Westmead, converting a butcher shop into a doctor's clinic. In the early 1990s the GP practice moved to its final location at 72 Hawkesbury Road.

I was born in 1977, followed by a move to Baulkham Hills and the following year was the arrival of Shaun. Strangely, around the time that the chaos of babies brings to a household, Dad started playing cricket for half a day for half the year for Newline Sports Club. In the 1977-78 season he had the best batting average of 39.83 and the best bowling average – his medium pacers getting him 18 wickets at an average of 14.83.

He soon moved to play for the St Matthew's cricket club for the next 30 years. He loved cricket, playing, watching and teaching us, at least me and Shaun. We're very grateful for the love of cricket and sport he cultivated in us.

There were a few migrants around in the 1970s and 1980s but having the unusual name

of Bandula Herat there were inevitably multiple variations that appeared on letters and invitations. There was Bandy Heart, Dr Heart, Bruce, my personal favourite was Barnaby and just recently Brandi. You will well know that Dad would have taken this all in his stride and laughed at it all. Making a joke was, I would say, one of his core missions in life. I'm sure you will all remember a joke he told you, that at least he found funny. Many of you from this church can probably remember some kind of joke he told as part of the weekly announcements on a Sunday morning. Often Dad would be welcoming people as they entered, shaking people's hands, showing them to a seat with a smile. Mum recalled a certain parishioner who every Sunday asked Dad to take his pulse upon arrival at the service. He'd ask Dad, "Will I live?". Dad would reply, "As long as the sermon won't be too long".

Even though Dad was busy with running a business, attending medical meetings out of hours twice or three times a week, playing cricket and cleaning the house on his morning off, he still managed to find time to teach all three of us to ride our bikes, help with primary school assignments, taught us how to methodically mow a lawn and he taught all of us to drive. Our next door neighbour, Marnie sent us this memory. Like Mum and Dad, I also have very fond memories of Bandu out the front gardening and always smiling. He was friendly to everyone, including my best friend Shab, even going so far as to park her car every time she came over. Shab was a shocking driver and could never master the curb on the corner of your place!

Speaking of driving, one of the defining features of Dad in the 1970s and 1980s was the Volvo. First there was the light blue one, then the canary yellow one and then the gold one. Each retained the same number plate BH190 and being the only gold Volvo I ever saw ever on the road, everyone knew when Dad had arrived to pick us up.

There was an infamous trip that took place in the early 1990s in the gold Volvo. Dad's junior resident from Auburn Hospital I mentioned earlier Paul Percy, had a daughter who I became great friends with at high school so their paths crossed again. So the Percy's and the Heart's (I mean Herat's) set out one fine day to Jamberoo Recreation Park outside of Wollongong. I'm informed from Mr Percy it was somewhere around Liverpool, the lead gold Volvo pulled over followed by the second car, a silver Volvo (what is it with Doctorrs and Volvos?). Dad stepped out of the gold Volvo and walked to the driver's side of silver Volvo. "Percy, where are we?" were his words. All Percy could reply with was, "I don't know, I'm following you". Mark and I still use Dad's line whenever we're not quite sure where we are and I recently learnt the Percy's more than 20 years later, also still repeat this line when lost!

He was a man of a few hidden talents that you may not be aware of. I think this is the right time to bring them these into the open.

Dad enjoyed swimming in our above ground pool. However, you didn't want to be either in the pool with him or within at least five meters of the pool. I have never known anyone to expend so much energy and displace so much water swimming the three strokes of freestyle to the other end of the pool. One lap really was good exercise for him!

Having spent a significant part of his life without much hair, this may surprise you. But before he lost it, he told me in detail how he would use Brylcreem to style it. Growing up in primary school, I had short hair but Rose had long hair. Each morning Dad would brush it, tie it up into pigtails or ponytails and finish it off in style with a ribbon. The care he used to take on himself, he now transferred to Rose's hair.

Now I'm going to put down this hidden talent to having four older sisters. Rose was the first of us to marry in 2000. Despite starting to get ready hours before the service, there was of course a mad rush just before the photographer arrived and Rose wasn't in her dress! So in the haste of everyone else getting ready, a cool calm Dad, was spotted on hand lacing up the intricate back of her dress in turbo speed. Hidden talents indeed.

Dad was very methodical and tidy. Every morning would start with 15 minutes of stretching exercises in the lounge room that we used to join in with in our pyjamas. He would head to work at 8:30 then return home for lunch somewhere around 1:30. He'd change out of his work clothes and mum would gather out a menagerie of leftovers from the fridge that wouldn't necessarily go together for him to eat. As long as he could eat some bread, his favourite carbohydrate, with this haphazard meal, he was happy. While eating he would read the Daily Telegraph, then have some fruit while reading the sports pages. Next would be a 15 minute sleep, with the radio alarm going off right on 3pm. A 5 minute shower followed by a cup of tea was next while shaving and brushing his teeth. He then got dressed again and made a quick exit right on 3:30 to make it back to the surgery by 4pm. Clockwork. It was a beautifully timed routine, everytime.

Carefully crafted photo albums

This methodical nature extended into developing carefully crafted photo albums after a major trip or event. He would meticulously arrange photos and write or cut out words from magazines, describing the place or situation of the photo. Two unlinked examples were sent to us in the last week – one from our old next door neighbor that was a book with pages and pages of photos and daily updates as their driveway was concreted and another to mark the engagement of his nephew Asela. He even wrote a caption under a

photo of himself in an album that said "Who is this man?"

Working as a doctor was a major part of Dad's life. He was involved in the Western Sydney Division of General Practice and organized and chaired their meetings for many years. As a doctor he was involved in work among the homeless and really did have a heart for others. A birthday card from Mum and Dad always including a personal message from Dad and a stick figure drawing of some kind usually involving a car. While on one of my overseas mission trips, I received a letter from Roly, our white maltese terrier, typed up by Dad. Dad got to know many people from the Sri Lankan community through the relatives, friends of relatives and the Bellbirds club. Their NYE dinner dance's were a favourite. Over the years he got to know lots of parents of our school friends and really enjoyed a neighbourhood party in the cul-de-sac for any occasion. He loved playing the host and had a smile and a joke for everyone. He warmly welcomed our spouses and their families, Dharshan, Mark and Kylie and loved each one of you.

When he retired from work in 2007 the signs of dementia to be later diagnosed as Alzheimer's began to show. But before it got too bad, Mum and Dad enjoyed travelling to many countries in Europe, England, Alaska, Canada and Sri Lanka. Mark, myself and Bethany enjoyed Dad's last trip to Sri Lanka to see the houses Mum and Dad grew up in, their schools and other significant parts of the country that made up their life. It was a very special trip and I'm really glad we did it.

In 2013, the constant care and supervision required to keep Dad at home was too much and he moved into ARV Woodbury at Winston Hills. Deconstruction of this section offered an opportunity for dad to move into the newly constructed ARV at The Ponds for his last two years. Many of the staff from Woodbury moved across also and continued to care for him there. He wasn't any trouble to the staff, being very obliging in whatever they needed to assist him with and like any good doctor, took whatever medication was given to him without any fuss.

For all that he was and did he wasn't a perfect person. And he knew that. He knew he needed forgiveness for the things he did and said and thought that were wrong by his Creator God. And he decided to accept the free gift of forgiveness handed out to him through faith in Jesus. Jesus, who was the fulfillment of many promises of a Saviour who was to come, who took away the punishment and guilt of sin. By accepting this free gift more than 40 years ago, Dad moved from death to life. And so we know that he is in heaven, a child of God and rejoicing in His presence.

Over the last two weeks when I visited, I would read psalms to him, which are songs in the Bible written about 3000 years ago and I talked to him

about what was to come. He was alert in these days for short periods and nodded as I talked and looked me in the eye and tried his best to talk and make a sound - things I hadn't seen him do for years. He knew where he was going, he knew his earthly life was coming to an end but he was about to meet His God. I'll finish with part of Psalm 112 that I read to him the day before he passed away:

"Praise the Lord.

*Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
who finds great delight in his commands.
His children will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in his house,
and his righteousness endures forever.
Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.
Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely,
who conducts his affairs with justice.
Surely he will never be shaken;
a righteous man will be remembered forever.
He will have no fear of bad news;
his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
His heart is secure, he will have no fear;
in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.
He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor,
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn will be lifted high in honor."*

—Melanie Hughes

Samuel Albert DE SILVA,
30.03.1930 - 30.03.2019

Loving husband of Celia Doreen (deceased), loving father to Alix and Ronald, grandfather of Pravin,



Leanne, Renny, Sean and Cheryl, cherished great grandfather of Charlotte and Anastasia.

Sam's daughter is CSA member Alix Vaz. Sam was educated at St Peters College, Bambalapitiya and lived at Kensington Gardens, Colombo. Sam worked at Lake House

Newspapers as a Librarian and at the Gal Oya Development Board from its inception until he migrated with mum to Australia in 1973 and lived in Sydney.

His dad was also named Samuel and his mum was Florence (nee Patternot). He was the brother of Edward, Audrey, Herman, Eustace, Estelle, Irene & Patrick, who all predeceased him.

He will be greatly missed by family and friends.

At peace in God's care.

SUBBIAH MUTHIAH

Passed away on 15 - 04 - 2019



A member of the CSA since 2006, Subbiah Muthiah was born in Chennai (India) but lived in Sri Lanka for several years, working as a journalist and editor. He was Editor of the Sunday Times when he had to return to India after Sri Lanka attained Independence. He was a regular contributor to The Ceylankan.

In India, Muthiah was an editor on The Hindu newspaper in Madras and was author of the world renowned column Madras Miscellany (something he derived immense joy from compiling) and came to be regarded as the chronicler of Madras (he did not like being called a historian). He was so devoted to ensuring his column appeared without fail on the due date. Even the death of his wife did not occasion a break. The column that appeared immediately after her passing had an opening sentence addressed to her, stating that she would have wanted him to continue. And that was the truth. If there was someone even more passionate about Madras Miscellany than he was, it was Valliammal Muthiah. And he paid her a handsome tribute in an interview — 'Fortunately, I have a young and energetic wife... who manages the home as well as the finances. She makes sure I don't have to worry about anything other than my work.' Sadly, she passed away in 2013 and life became tougher for him. At the time he passed away, Madras Miscellany had appeared a record 973 times. It was his dearest wish that he touch 1,000 but fate willed otherwise.

(An indepth tribute to S.Muthiah will be published in the August 2019 issue of the Journal).

T.S.Eliot at work

Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where the story ended.
Dust inbreathed was a house—
The wall, the wainscot and the mouse
The death of hope and despair,
Is the death of air.

Little Gidding (142)

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt out ends of smokey days.
Prufrock (1917)

Kandy's Coffee Bungalow By Dr. Sanjiva Wijesinha



• *The Coffee Bungalow*

I am seated in a prettily manicured garden as dusk is falling, sipping a cup of fragrant Highland tea and gazing out at the vista of Kandy stretched out below me.

Far in the distance, standing out like a beacon, is the floodlit white stupa of the Asgiriya Viharaya. To the right in front of me the dark green hills of Udawattekelle stand guard - while towering over me on my left is the tree covered Wakarawatte (Dunumadalawa) forest reserve -with its natural reservoir that provides the city's water supply. The glassy waters of the Kandy Lake with the golden roofed temple behind it can be glimpsed in front while over to my right I can see the Dumbara Valley and the mountains of the Knuckles range in the far distance. Despite the modern constructions that blot the view here and there, the view of Kandy from the hills

above it is still magnificent. I am privileged, as I sip my tea, to be enjoying this vista from The Coffee Bungalow, Kandy's latest boutique hotel.

Originally built in the eighteen sixties by a British coffee planter, the bungalow over the years has had many owners - including Mrs Ruth Keyt, first



• *Dining Room*

wife of the famous painter George Keyt - until it was bought by its present owner, a visionary who decided to refurbish it and convert it into a boutique hotel.

Accommodation is limited to just seven spacious rooms, two on the ground floor, four on the first floor and the large Planter's Suite on the second floor. Each is tastefully equipped with the best furniture and fittings - including four poster beds and claw footed bathtubs. The living rooms are beautifully decorated with Dumbara mat wall hangings as well

as ancient maps and photographs from a bygone era. While the conveniences are certainly modern, the place has a timeless elegance and genteel charm.

Guests can book their accommodation here on a bed and breakfast basis; dinner and snacks can also be prepared to order. The meals we were given - hearty breakfasts fit for a British planter plus four course dinners that could best be described as Sri Lankan fusion food - were delicious and beautifully presented. On

the first afternoon of our stay here we even enjoyed High Tea on the lawn as in the days of the British Raj!

An infinity pool from which one has a great



• *The view from my window.*

view of Kandy adds a touch of modernity to the property, and I would certainly recommend a dip in the pool. However, I myself am

happy to leisurely sip my cup of tea as dusk falls, savouring the view from the comfort of my garden chair - while allowing my hardier fellow guests to enjoy themselves in this pool with a view.

A foggy London Town

A foggy day in London Town
Had me low and had me down.
I viewed the morning with alarm,
The British Museum had lost its charm.
How long I wondered would this thing last?
But the age of miracles hadn't passed,
For, suddenly, I saw you there
And through the foggy London town the sun was
shining everywhere.

A Foggy Day (1917) Music by George Gershwin

I got rhythm,
I got music,
I got my man
Who could ask for anything more?

Music by George Gershwin (1917)



Meals Ammi Made

SAUSAGE MIXED KURAKKAN NOODLES

by Dilanthee De Silva (Colombo Chapter)

Ingredients

1 pkt Kurakkan noodles
2 Carrots (grated)
100g Cabbage (chopped)
Leeks only the white part (Chopped)
1pkt Sausage (Sliced)
1 tbsps Chilli paste
2 tbsps Soya Sauce
2-3 tbsps Peanuts
1 tbsps Ginger, garlic
Egg
Vegetable oil

Method:

Boil the noodles. Heat vegetable oil and fry the ginger and garlic till the aroma fills the air and add the sausages. Then add grated carrot, chopped cabbage, leeks (white part), egg (optional), chilli paste and Soya Sauce. Then add noodles, peanuts and salt and mix well.

If necessary sprinkle some finely chopped onion leaves to decorate the noodles.

SEND US YOUR RECIPES

Readers are invited to submit their favourite recipes for publication in the recipe column. Your recipes will preferably be simple and easy to prepare. They must be of Sri Lankan origin and as this is a family-orientated column, we suggest that your recipes be of meals you learnt to prepare from your Ammi or Achchi.

So why wait? Send those mouth-watering recipes to the Editor without delay.

Good cook!

The cook was a good cook, as cooks go; and as good cooks go, she went.

Saki (1904)

The young have aspirations that never come to pass, the old have reminiscences of what never happened.

Saki (1904)

Congratulations and a Warm Welcome to our New Members

NALIN & PADMA KARUNATHILEKE, West
Pennant Hills NSW 2125

UDAYA & SAVI PEELIGAMA, Baulkham Hills
NSW 2153

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

HENRY RODRIGOE, Kambah, ACT 2902 (from
Jeremy de Lima, Vermont South VIC)

JITTO ARULAMPALAM, Blackburn, VIC 3130
(from Hugh Karunanayake, Blackburn VIC.)

SOMASUNDARAM SKANDAKUMAR, Rajagiriya,
Sri Lanka (from Doug Jones, Castle Hill NSW).

Advertising in The Ceylankan

For some time, CSA members and others have indicated an interest in using the Journal to promote their goods and services. However, we have been maintaining the ideal of the founders of the CSA, that the Journal must not be made a means for commercial profit, but only a vehicle for research, study and broadcast of the rich heritage and culture of Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

Now, with the constant rise in costs of delivery of the Journal to members worldwide, we need to look at additional sources of revenue. Accordingly, the Committee has decided to accommodate advertising and promotional matter in the form of loose-leaf flyers, but not as part of the body of the Journal.

Suitable material, in keeping with the non-political, non-partisan aims and ideals of the CSA, will be considered. All such copy is to be submitted to the Editor for consideration.

Once accepted, the advertiser will need to supply the printed flyers in sufficient number for inclusion in that particular issue of the Journal.

The cost of inserting such flyers is \$500 per issue of the Journal, paid in advance.



General Meetings

**Sydney
Sunday 26 May 2019**

The Second Public Meeting of the Ceylon Society will take place on Sunday 26th May 2019 commencing at 6.30 PM at Pennant Hills Community Centre Hall, Corner Ramsay Road (off Yarrara Road), Pennant Hills. Admission is FREE to all members and their guests and all are welcome to attend.

Our guest speaker is



Ananda Amaranath, LLB
who will speak on

Murders at the Vicarage - The Mathew Peiris Case

In the annals of legal history of Sri Lanka, in very few cases has the guilt or innocence of an accused been decided on medical evidence. The trial relating to the murder of Russell Ingram and Eunice Pieris by the involuntary administration of an anti-diabetic drug to their meals is a classic example of a case where medical evidence played a critical role in the outcome of the trial. The observations and medical opinions of numerous medical professionals played a critical role in assisting the Judges of the Trial-at-Bar to arrive at a guilty verdict.

At the relevant time, Rev Mathew Peiris was the Vicar of St Paul's Anglican Church in Kynsey Road, Borella. He was a well-known exorcist who conducted exorcism ceremonies in the church and frequently visited homes in Sri Lanka and abroad to conduct such ceremonies to ward off evil spirits by the invocation of religious rituals. Dalrene Ingram, the co-accused in this trial, first came into contact with Rev Mathew at such a ceremony. Dalrene was employed by Rev Mathew as his secretary and typist, and moved into the vicarage with her family that included her husband Russell and three children.

It was this association between Rev. Mathew and Dalrene that culminated in the death of Russell Ingram and Mrs Eunice Peiris. Rev Mathew was convicted and sentenced to death. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1994. Having spent 15 years in jail, the 79-year-old Rev Mathew was released from jail in a general amnesty on 28 October 1997.

He was still in robes when he came out of jail and professed his faith in God. He passed away on 12 May 1998.

Dalrene's death sentence was set aside and she was acquitted by the Court of Criminal Appeal.

Our speaker Ananda Amaranath comes from Beliatte in the deep south of Sri Lanka. His schooling was at St. Thomas's College and his Law Degree is from the University of Colombo. He is an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka and was also admitted as a Solicitor of England and Wales. Subsequently, he was admitted as a Barrister of the Supreme Court of Seychelles and in Australia as a Barrister and Solicitor of New South Wales.

He had a short period in private practice in Colombo following graduation, after which he joined the Attorney General's Department as a State Counsel. He prosecuted in various provincial High Courts in Sri Lanka and was involved in several murder cases. Noteworthy in his experience were the trials arising out of the 1971 JVP insurrection and the Galenbindunuwewa murder case, which is regarded as one of the famous criminal cases of Sri Lanka.

In 1983, as a Senior State Counsel, he was a member of a team of Prosecutors who prosecuted Rev Mathew Peiris and Dalrene Ingram in the High Court of Colombo.

At the end of 1983, he was seconded to the Attorney General's Chambers of the Republic of Seychelles and was appointed Principal State Counsel, responsible for the management of the civil and criminal divisions of the Chambers and appearing as a Barrister in the more complex cases that came up in the Courts.

On his arrival in Australia in 1989, Ananda joined the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in NSW and practised as a Senior Prosecutor for 27 years. For the past two years he has been in private practice in Sydney.

Social: A brief question time from the audience will be followed by a social. Those able to are requested to please bring a plate of non-sweet, savory finger food. Avoid cakes with icing please as the general preference is for plain cakes, sandwiches and savoury pastries.

To avoid duplication of food items please contact our Social Convenor Amal Wahab on (02) 9402 7735. As an alternative, a donation to the CSA to help defray costs could be made at the meeting.

COLOMBO CHAPTER

**The 2nd General Meeting of the Colombo Chapter
is scheduled to be held at 5.30 pm on
Friday 28th June 2019**

at the Organisation of Professional Associations
(OPA), 275/75, Professor Stanley Wijesundera Mw
(Off Bauddhaloka Mw/Reid Avenue, Colombo 7.

The Guest speaker is



Dr. Romola Rassool who will talk on
“LESSER KNOWN LANGUAGES
OF SRI LANKA”

South Asia is one of the most populous and most linguistically diverse regions of the world. While the number of languages in Sri Lanka is significantly lesser than that of India (461), Pakistan (73), and Afghanistan (42), it is still felt that an in-depth understanding of the current status and issues surrounding the languages of Sri Lanka can yield many significant lessons for academics and practitioners interested in language maintenance. Additionally, in Sri Lanka, where the tensions between the two major languages and their speakers have occupied the polity for nearly 50 years, it is important that other, smaller languages of Sri Lanka be documented and described so that there can be more awareness of these languages and their speakers amongst all Sri Lankans.

Considering the above, the aims of this presentation are to provide an overview of the lesser known languages of Sri Lanka and to examine the micro and macro level reasons for language shift/loss, with emphasis on how internal and external politics affect language shift/loss.

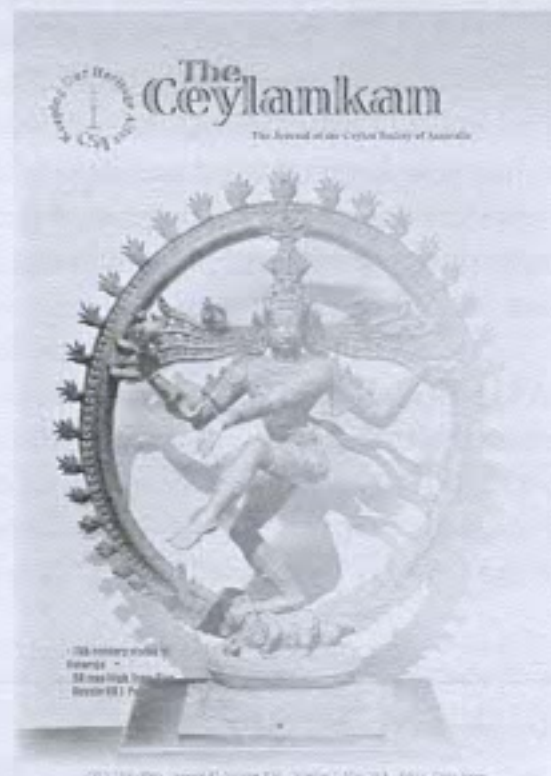
Guest speaker Dr Rassool obtained her PhD in Sociolinguistics from the University of Melbourne in 2014 as a recipient of the Australian Leadership Award. Her PhD thesis investigated issues of power, privilege, and identity in the maintenance of the Sri Lanka Malay language. While her primary interest is in language maintenance, she is also interested in issues of minority politics in Sri Lanka, bilingual education, and language policy.

She holds a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, and a Bachelor's degree in Arts from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

Romola is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English Language Teaching of the

University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. She works as a visiting lecturer in two Master's degree programs and also teaches Business Communication in several postgraduate programs. At present she serves as a Senior Academic Expert in English Language Skills Enhancement in the Accelerating Higher Education and Expansion Development (AHEAD) Operation which is funded by the World Bank and focuses on enhancing various aspects of higher education in the state universities of Sri Lanka.

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mailed to his/her home.

Please contact the
Treasurer, Deepak Pritamdas
on 0434 860 188

Men and suffering

It is not true that suffering enobles the character,
happiness does that sometimes, but suffering, for the
most part, makes men petty and vindictive.

*W. Somerset Maugham
(Moon and Sixpence, 1919)*

Books for Sale

This is a regular column for the benefit of members (& others) who author books or have books, maps & other collectibles and would like the Society to promote these materials on their behalf. No charges apply to members, **but donations are encouraged from all using this service.** Regrettably, items can be listed only in three (3) consecutive issues. Please contact the editor for further details.



The Big Girl
by Alagu Subramaniam

The Big Girl & Other Stories is a retro-collection of 17 short stories by the talented posthumous author Alagu Subramaniam. They recount scenes of life in Jaffna more than 50 years ago. The book

which had disappeared from circulation has now been updated and reprinted in its entirety. These stories evocatively capture the ethos of an era now past and will leave you nostalgic for a simpler time.

If you wish to have a copy for A\$10, or A\$15 (including postage within Australia) please contact the author's grand niece in Melbourne, Premila: 0432406146 or premila.thur@gmail.com

Premila is a member of the Melbourne Chapter of the CSA.

WE NEED SPEAKERS

The CSA welcomes professionals, members and non-members interested in speaking at our public meetings on a subject of their choice and expertise, that falls within the ambit of the Society's ideals and of interest to members. Our meetings are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo and take place quarterly in February, May, August and November of each year. Dates can be arranged to suit the needs and availability of the speakers. Overhead projections and public address facilities can also be made available.

If any of our readers know of potential candidates from among family members, friends and other contacts to be suitable speakers at our meetings in the future and who live in or visit Australia or Sri Lanka at various times, please initiate the possibility of their sharing their knowledge with like minds. An enthralled audience is always assured.

If you have someone in mind, please contact CSA President Pauline Gunawardane on (02) 9736 39787 (email: paulineg@ozemail.com.au or Melbourne Chapter Convenor Hemal Gurusinghe (Mob) 0427 725 740 (email: hemguru@hotmail.com).

How to become a member

The CSA has been in existence for the past 21 years and continuing to draw the interest of both Sri Lankans and others world wide. Anyone with a common interest in the culture and history of Ceylon/Sri Lanka and wishes to share that interest is welcome to join this society. Younger members of the community are specially invited to do so.

Please get in touch with any of the following for details on obtaining Application Forms, making payments and so on: In **Sydney**: Deepak Pritamdas (Treasurer) P.O.Box 489, Blacktown NSW 2148. Mobile: 0434 860 188 Email: deepakpsl@yahoo.com In **Melbourne**: Contact: Hemal Gurusinghe, Mobile: 0427 725 740 Email: hemguru@hotmail.com In **Colombo**: M.Asoka T, de Silva (Local Treasurer) 011 282 2933 Mobile: 94 775097517 Email: desilvaasoka@yahoo.com Also see "Important notice regarding CSA subscriptions ..." on page 35)

Have you changed your address lately?

Have you changed your contact details lately? – home address, email address, landline telephone and Mobile phone number? If you have, please contact CSA Treasurer Deepak Pritamdas so our records can be updated and help us ensure the Journal will be mailed to you without interruption.

Contact Deepak on his Mobile 0434 860 188 or email him on deepakpsl@yahoo.com.

com.) or Colombo Chapter Secretary Anandalal Nanayakkara 077 327 2989 (email: anandalal10@gmail.com).

FUTURE MEETINGS OF CSA SYDNEY MEETINGS IN 2019

Sunday 26 May – Speaker is Mr Ananda Amaranath LLB (See page 32 for further details).

• Sunday 25 August

AGM & Social

• Saturday 23 November

Important notice regarding CSA subscriptions for 2019

The annual CSA membership fees have not been changed for over ten years. However, during this period there have been sharp increases in postage charges, printing costs, hall hires, insurance etc and it is no longer possible to make ends meet. The CSA Committee at its last meeting reluctantly decided to **increase the annual membership fees for overseas members from AS 30 to AS 40, and for Australian Pensioners from AS 20 to AS 25.** The annual membership fees for other members resident in Australia will remain unchanged at AS 30, and the rates for Colombo Chapter members will remain unchanged.

Membership subscriptions for 2019 are now due and please arrange payment, together with any arrears where applicable. Payments could be made by an Australian dollar cheque in favour of "Ceylon Society of Australia" posted to Deepak Pritamdas, Treasurer CSA, P O Box 489, Blacktown, NSW 2148, Australia. Alternatively, a direct bank transfer could be made to the CSA Bank Account in Commonwealth Bank: BSB 062308, Account No. 1003 8725. Please do not fail to include with the transfer your name as

payee, otherwise we will have no way of identifying the payee. We have had two payments recently without the payee's name and we are unable to identify who has sent these payments.

For payments from overseas, if you have difficulty in sending the payment in Australian dollars, you could please send a bank draft or bank transfer in US dollars or Sterling pounds. We regret that personal cheques in foreign currencies are not acceptable. Since our Bank charges us 10 Australian dollars for converting a foreign currency payment to Australian dollars, please add 10 Australian dollars to the amount due and convert to US dollars by multiplying by 0.80, or if sending in sterling pounds, multiply by 0.60. These multipliers reflect approximately the current rates of exchange used by our Bank. For overseas bank transfers our Commonwealth Bank Swift Code is: CTBAAU2S

If you need any clarification please contact our Treasurer, Deepak Pritamdas, by email to: deepakpsl@yahoo.com. Also please send him an email when you send a direct bank transfer.

Information to our literary contributors

The Ceylankan is a quarterly publication that is looked forward to both here in Australia and worldwide. The Editor is constantly on the lookout for literary contributions from our members and others. Contributions are given careful consideration with a view to publication when received.

While original, previously unpublished articles are preferred, submissions relating to the culture, history and heritage of Ceylon/Sri Lanka in keeping with the ideals of the CSA and are of a **non-racial, non-political, non-religious and non-controversial nature** are always welcome too.

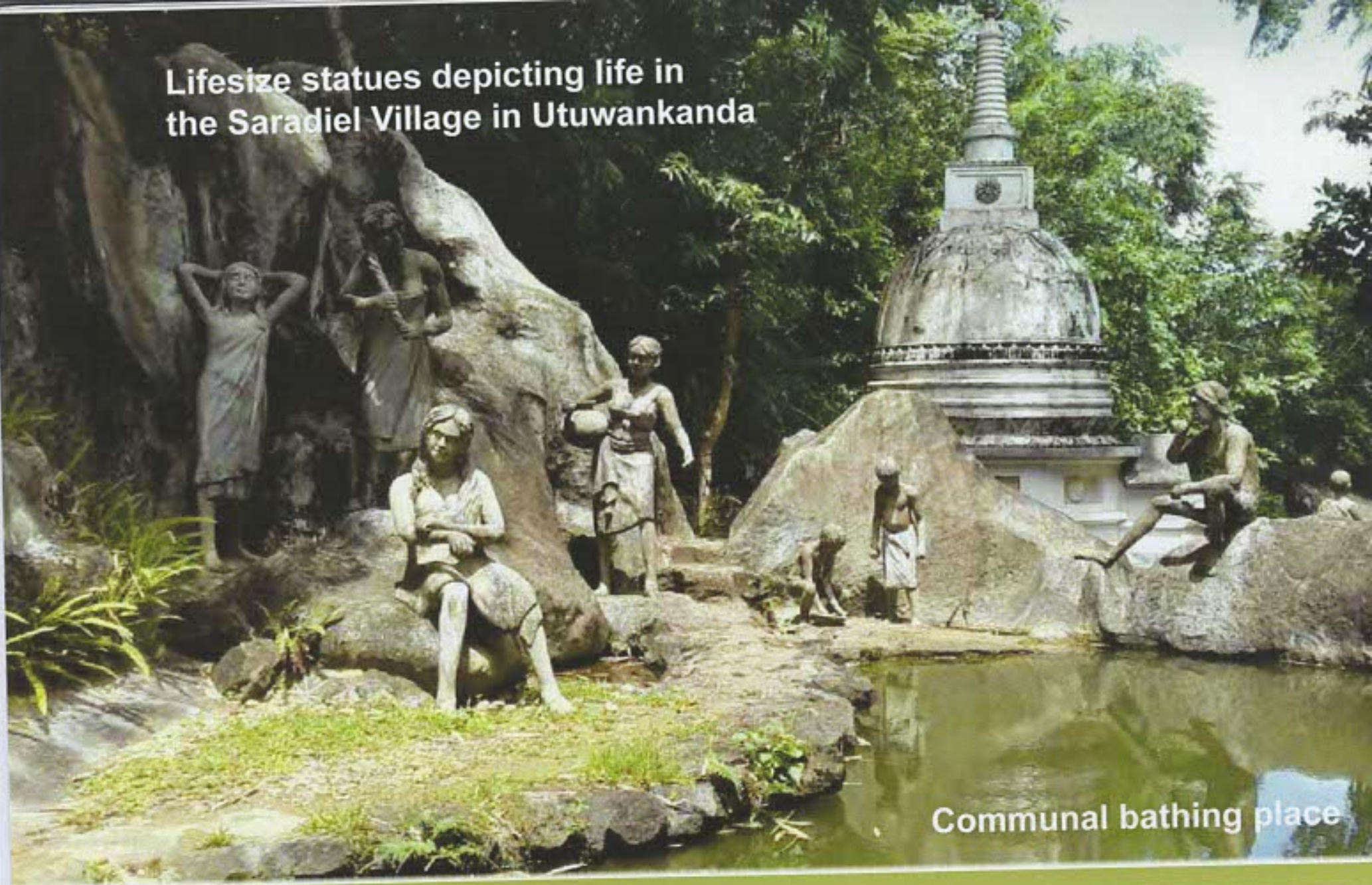
New writers with a passion for Sri Lankan culture and heritage are welcome. You don't have to be a professional writer – even contributions from someone who has not previously put pen to paper will equally receive our careful attention.

Who knows, an enormous treasure of hidden literary talent with recollections of life in the Motherland – the people, the places events and other memories that you can share, from whatever era, pre-Colonial, post-Colonial to modern. Your fascinating story waiting to be written may be the very story that our worldwide readership is waiting to enjoy.

To facilitate design/layout, submit your articles with very little or no formatting as possible – no indents at the start of paragraphs and no double spacing between lines; no space after full stops. Always use percent or per cent but never %. Where applicable, contributors are also asked to annotate bibliographical references, both for copyright purposes and to assist with further research by other members. Photographs to accompany your article, in colour or monotone, are welcome. They must be of a high resolution and in JPEG format.

While every effort will be made to print material that is relevant and correct, we cannot take responsibility for errors. If any errors of fact are found, the Editor would appreciate if any such inaccuracies be brought to his attention as early as possible.

Lifesize statues depicting life in
the Saradiel Village in Utuwankanda



Communal bathing place



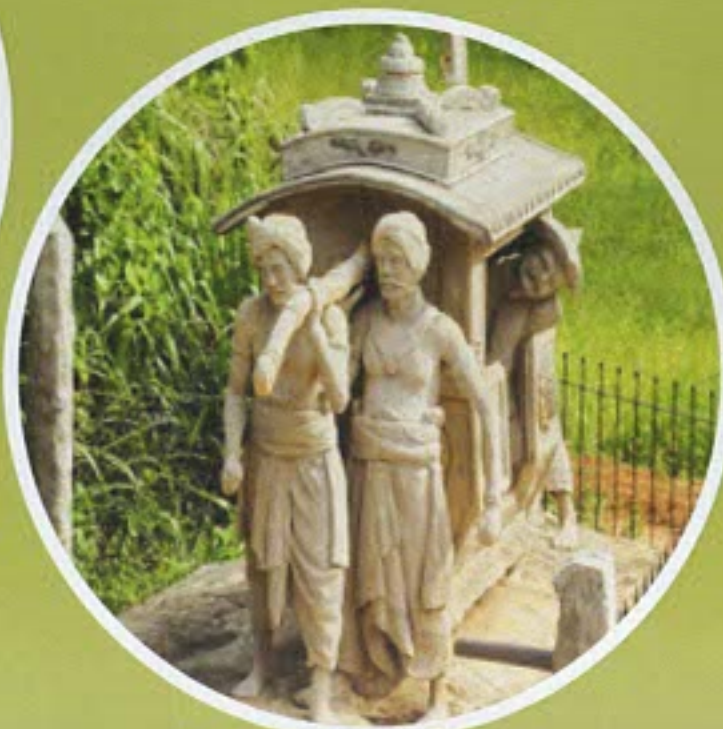
River ferry



Saradiel and Marikkar arrested



Policemen having a break



Palanquin
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